



## Administrative Regulation 1310 POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS

**Responsible Office:** Department of Government Affairs

### **PURPOSE**

This regulation shall establish the guidelines and protocols related to political activity on the properties and at the events of the Washoe County School District ("District").

### **REGULATION**

#### 1. Use of District Resources

- a. The use of District resources for partisan political purposes is prohibited, unless with the express permission of the Board of Trustees and in accordance with Nevada state law. No District resources, including buildings, materials, or supplies, shall be used to support, endorse, or oppose any candidate, ballot question, initiative or petition or any other matter currently before any local government agency (such as city councils and county commissions or planning and zoning boards or similar committees), or any matter being considered by the Nevada State Legislature or United States government without the permission of the Board of Trustees.
- b. Use of District resources for political campaign and other advocacy purposes is prohibited to include, but not limited to:
  - i. Funds received by the District for educational purposes.
  - ii. District mailing lists, to include the physical and/or e-mail addresses of District schools and offices, staff, and students/parents/guardians;
  - iii. District-provided office supplies, computers, telephones, facsimile machines, copies, etc.;
  - iv. District information technology, to include email and social media;
  - v. The District's sales tax exemption for purchases of goods and services; and
  - vi. Use of the District's name and/or logo on letterhead or any other materials for political purposes. This includes letters soliciting funds for political purposes or activities.

- vii. No officer or employee of the District shall knowingly expend or authorize the expenditure of District funds for the purpose of political advertising. Funds may be expended, however, for materials that describe the factual reasons for a measure but do not advocate the passage or defeat of such measure.

## 2. Student/Classroom Activities

- a. The teaching of the political process shall be done in an objective, neutral and fair manner.
  - i. Use of political material for instructional purposes in the classroom is not forbidden if the material presented has a legitimate relationship to the unit under study.
  - ii. All persons are entitled to maintain their own beliefs and to respectfully disagree without resorting to or being subjected to bullying or harassment. By declaring this goal, the District is not advocating or requiring the acceptance of differing beliefs in a manner that would inhibit freedom of expression.
- b. Student groups, operating under the supervision of the school/District, may participate in an event of a sitting elected official or government agency. Participation shall be on a voluntary basis and non-participation shall not impact the student's grade. Such student groups are prohibited from participating in partisan political events when under the supervision of the school.
- c. Political candidates and current officeholders are permitted to speak to students in class under certain guidelines (See Administrative Regulation 6144.2, Classroom Visitation of Political Candidates and/or Public Office Holders). Such individuals are to be presented impartially, and the opportunity for opposing viewpoints must be allowed. Prior to the visit, the teacher must demonstrate to the principal that an appropriate instructional objective will be served and the principal must approve the visit.
- d. Students may form a political party student organization. Formation of such an organization shall comply with the District's procedures related to clubs and activities (See CSI procedure OSP-010). No political activity shall be conducted during class hours.
- e. Students may volunteer on campaigns of their choosing in order to earn service or civic hours. Information related to such opportunities may be distributed to students in accordance with Board Policy 1140, Distribution

and Display of Informational and Non-School Materials, and its accompanying administrative regulation.

### 3. Classroom Visitation of Political Candidates and/or Public Office Holders

- a. The District has the responsibility to prepare students to become good citizens through active involvement in the political process. In order to do this, schools and teachers may invite declared political candidates and holders of elected or appointed public office to appear on campus, provided the following guidelines are met:
  - i. All candidates or office holders are presented impartially to students.
  - ii. Consideration will be given to the need for equal opportunity of expression of opposing points of view.
- b. When candidates or public office holders are invited to speak in a classroom setting, the following additional guidelines must be met:
  - i. The classroom teacher shall request approval of the principal or his/her designee prior to inviting a candidate or public office holder to visit and/or speak in a classroom. The District's Department of Government Affairs shall be notified.
  - ii. The school principal, or designee, must approve the visit prior to the classroom visit. The teacher shall demonstrate that the on-campus appearance contributes to an appropriate instructional objective and does not consume an inordinate amount of classroom time.
  - iii. Prior to the classroom visit, the teacher must discuss the purpose of the visit with the invited candidate or office holder and how it relates to instructional objectives.
  - iv. The principal is responsible for ensuring that, during the visit, District policies and regulations are met.

### 4. Political Activity by Staff

- a. Political activities of staff, including campaigning or advocating for candidates or for issues, must be kept separate and distinct from identification with and activities of the District. District employees shall have the liberty of political action when not engaged in their employment, provided such action is within the law and provided that such action does not impair their usefulness in their respective capacities.

- b. District employees may not use their District title in political endorsements or advocacy.
  - c. A staff member who is seeking, or who has been elected or appointed to public office, shall not conduct any business related to those activities while on duty, to include during normal work/contract hours.
5. Distribution of informational materials shall be done in accordance with Board Policy 1140 and its accompanying administrative regulation.
  - a. Prohibited materials include flyers, brochures or pamphlets which support, endorse or oppose a candidate, ballot question, initiative or petition, any matter currently before any local government agency (such as the city and county commission or planning and zoning boards), or any material urging a certain position on any matter being considered by the Nevada State Legislature.
  - b. Use of the District's bulk-mailing privilege for the distribution of political material is prohibited.
  - c. The use of the District mail system for distribution of political material is prohibited, except as provided for in collective bargaining agreements with recognized employee associations.
6. Signage that is displayed on District property that is, or becomes, political in nature must be removed or covered.
  - a. Political signage is defined as any sign indicating support for or opposition to an individual candidate, ballot question, or political matter, or reasonably resembling any signage of that nature as determined by the Superintendent or his/her designee. This includes signs mounted on vehicles or trailers but does not include items such as bumper stickers applied to a personal vehicle.
  - b. Signage on District property must be approved by the school principal and adhere to all other policies and procedures of the District.
7. Use of District facilities shall be in accordance with Board Policy 7120, and its accompanying administrative regulation.
  - a. District facilities may not be used for closed political meetings.
  - b. Precinct meetings, party caucuses and elections arranged by the Washoe County Registrar of Voters are allowed.
  - c. Political events are permitted if held during non-instructional hours.

- d. Certain non-partisan political or campaign activities, such as voter registration activities and candidate debates, may be permissible if they do not disrupt instructional time nor evidence a preference for or opposition to a political party or to candidates who have taken a particular position. Advance approval for such events, to include review of any materials, must be obtained from the District's Department of Government Affairs and the school principal.

## **DEFINITIONS**

1. "Political advertising" means a communication supporting or opposing a candidate for nomination or election to a public office or office of a political party, a political party, a public officer, or a measure being considered by the Nevada State Legislature or a local government body.

## **DESIRED OUTCOMES**

1. This administrative regulation serves to implement the provisions of Board Policy 1310 by ensuring students and staff are "informed, engaged and educated on civic duties in a fair, non-partisan manner."

## **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES & ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

1. This regulation reflects the goals of the District's Strategic Plan and aligns/complies with the governing documents of the District, to include:
  - a. Board Policy 1310, Political Activity in Schools
  - b. Board Policy 7120, Community Use of School Facilities
  - c. Board Policy 1140, Distribution of Informational Material through Students
2. The policy complies with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Nevada Administrative Code (NAC), to include:
  - a. Chapter 281A, Ethics in Government, and specifically:
    - i. NRS 281A.520 Public officer or employee prohibited from requesting or otherwise causing governmental entity to incur expense or make expenditure to support or oppose ballot question or candidate in certain circumstances.

## **REVIEW AND REPORTING**

1. This administrative regulation shall be reviewed as part of the bi-annual review and reporting process, following each regular session of the Nevada Legislature.

The Board of Trustees shall receive notification of any required changes to the guiding policy as well as an audit of the accompanying governing documents.

2. Additional administrative regulations and/or other associated documents may be developed as necessary to implement and support this administrative regulation.

## REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Modification
9-9-1997	1.0	Adopted
10-11-2005	2.0	Revised
11/8/2013	2.1	Revised to include NRS 281A under Implementation Guidelines
3-13-2017	3.0	Revised: combined with administrative regulation 6144.2, Classroom Visitation of Political Candidates and/or Public Office Holders