



Administrative Policy No. 18.68

Subject: DSHS Employee Participation in Political Activities

Information Contact: Human Resources Division

Authorizing Source: [Federal Hatch Act Modernization Act of 2012, 5 U.S.C. Chapter 15, Sections 1505-1508](#)
[RCW 41.06.250](#) – Political Activities
[RCW 42.17.130](#) – Use of Public Office or Facilities
[RCW 42.52.180](#) – Use of Public Resources for Political Campaigns

Effective Date: July 1, 2005

Revised: October 29, 2025

Approved By: **Original approved by Wendy Long**
Senior Director, Human Resources Division

Purpose

This policy establishes the limitations for all Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) employees' participation in political activities. DSHS employees are subject to state and federal laws and rules that restrict political activities.

Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS employees and includes coverage under the federal Hatch Act and Modernization Act of 2012.

If this policy conflicts with a [collective bargaining agreement](#) (CBA), the CBA supersedes the policy to the extent it conflicts.

Additional Guidance

Administrative policies

- 1.01 Communication with the state legislature
- 1.02 Communication with congress, federal agencies, and other state governors
- 18.64 Standards of ethical conduct
- 18.91 Use of resources

Definitions

Federal Hatch Act and Modernization Act of 2012 (Hatch Act): The federal law restricting political activities of certain federal, state, and local employees whose duties involve programs financed in whole or in part by a federal loan or grant.

Non-partisan: Not influenced by, being in support of, or associated with the policies or interests of a specific political party.

Partisan: To be influenced by, in support of, or associated with the policies or interests of a specific political party.

Political Activity: Any act or practice conducted for the purpose of influencing others' opinions with respect to legislative, administrative or electoral matters regardless of whether it's an election year or not.

Policy:

- A. Participation in political activity is permissible if it complies with this policy and the applicable statutes and rules and does not conflict with the employee's job duties.
- B. Employees, on their own time and when not serving in an official capacity or representing DSHS may:
 1. Express their opinions on political subjects and candidates.
 2. Campaign for or against a political candidate, constitutional amendments, referendums, initiatives, or ballot initiatives.
 3. Make a personal campaign contribution to support or oppose a political candidate or ballot initiative.
 4. Wear political campaign badges and buttons.
 5. Be a candidate for a nonpartisan elective office.
 6. Be a candidate for a partisan elective office under the guidelines of Section C of this policy.
- C. Employees must submit and have leave approved prior to engaging in political activity, if during work time.

D. Employees must not:

1. Use, or perceive to use, their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the results of an election or nomination for office. When participating in a campaign, whether as a candidate, a campaign worker or otherwise, and whether for partisan or non-partisan office or in support of or opposition to a ballot proposition, DSHS staff must avoid appearing to represent DSHS or a DSHS position.
2. Use their title or affiliation with DSHS along with letters, advertisements, personal appearances, or other campaign related activities, unless the statement includes a disclaimer that the employee is speaking only for themselves and not for DSHS. However, a DSHS employee who is a candidate for office may use their title in describing their work history and work for DSHS.
3. Use their position as a public employee to coerce, command, or advise another state employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency, or person for political purposes.
4. Use state facilities for political activity, including the use of public money, equipment, time, materials, and supplies for any political purposes, or to assist a candidate for a partisan or nonpartisan office. See also [RCW 42.17A.555](#). No campaigning or political fund raising shall be allowed at any time in DSHS offices, nor shall any funds, equipment, supplies, materials or any other facilities of the office be used, directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting a campaign.
5. Hold a public office in a political subdivision of the state when holding such an office is incompatible or substantially interferes with performing official state duties.
6. Engage in campaign activities on work time.
7. Lobby on work time for or against legislation for personal or professional interest, unless allowed under [administrative policy 1.01](#).
8. Display campaign materials of any kind such as, but not limited to, signs, brochures, petitions, or articles of clothing in their office or work area.

E. Other restrictions

1. DSHS employees funded in whole or in part by federal funding may be subject to Hatch Act restrictions.
2. Prior to filing as a candidate with the Secretary of State or county elections department, an employee wishing to be a partisan candidate must:

- a. Notify the appointing authority of candidacy or intent to run for a partisan election. See also [RCW 41.06.250](#).
 - b. Ensure that their salary is not completely funded by federal loans or grants.
 - c. Be aware of DSHS policies regarding standards of ethical conduct and use of state resources. See also [RCW 42.52.180](#) and administrative policies [18.64](#) and [18.91](#).
 - d. Understand Hatch Act restrictions from engaging in political misconduct.
3. If a supervisor or appointing authority becomes aware that an employee has filed for a partisan office and has failed to notify DSHS of their candidacy:
- a. The appointing authority must notify DSHS human resources division.
 - b. The DSHS human resources division will notify the Federal Office of Special Counsel (OSC) if employee's position is 100% federally funded.
 - i. If OSC determines there has been a violation of the Federal Hatch Act, OSC may prosecute the employee before the Federal Merit System Protection Board (MSPB).
 - ii. Prosecution may occur even if the employee withdraws from candidacy.
 - c. If the MSPB finds the employee's violation warrants dismissal from employment, DSHS will separate the employee. Failure to do so will result in DSHS forfeiting a portion of the federal assistance equal to two years of the employee's salary.