

University Employees and Political Activities

As political campaigns are approaching next year and some campaign activity is already underway, University faculty and staff should remember that, since they are public employees, some limitations exist on their ability to participate in these campaigns. Board Rule 304 acknowledges that University officials and employees continue to enjoy the rights of all citizens to become involved in the political affairs of their local, state, and national communities. However, since the University itself may not endorse any political candidate, it is important that any UAH employee who is active in supporting a candidate make it clear that he/she is doing so strictly as a private citizen and not as a representative of the University. This obligation is especially acute for senior level administrators, because of their close identification with the institution in the eyes of those in the community. Both the “appearance” of support by the University, as well as the reality, must be avoided.

A further element of the foregoing “non-institutional involvement” rule is that University resources, property, and time are not to be used for the benefit of any political candidate, campaign, or organization. This includes solicitation efforts for contributions or other support for a candidate, campaign, or organization. UAH employees are prohibited from personal involvement in the use of University resources for these partisan purposes, and they are also not to “permit” it, such as, for example, by a subordinate.

UAH employees may run for political office, and in fact several have held elected public office in the past. However, the written consent of the Chancellor must be obtained by the employee before he/she seeks election. An important question that will need to be addressed in seeking such approval is whether holding public office would interfere with or result in a conflict of interest with the individual’s employment responsibilities, which must be given priority.

In any case where there is a question about the application of this policy to an employee’s political activities, the employee should report the matter to the Chancellor for approval.