

To the University of Michigan Campus Community:

Many members of the University community have asked about their rights and responsibilities regarding participating in a political campaign. We have developed the following information to help you understand the many activities you may engage in as members of our campus community, as well as those that are restricted by law.

Section 57 of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act prohibits public bodies and anyone acting for a public body from using state resources to influence a political campaign relating to a candidate election or the qualification, defeat or passage of a ballot proposal. However, the law does not in any way restrict the ability of individuals, acting on their own behalf and using their personal time and resources, to participate fully in political activities.

The law also includes some exceptions that permit limited participation of University faculty, students, and staff in campaign-related activities. Here are some examples of the kinds of activities in which faculty, students, and staff may properly engage under the law:

- * Conduct scholarly research on the effects of a ballot initiative on the University, on the state, on the economy, etc.
- * Compile and assemble data and other factual information on the effects of a ballot proposal.
- * Disseminate factual material and/or the results of scholarly research on a ballot proposal to news organizations and academic journals.
- * Post factual material and/or the results of research on a ballot initiative to a University website.
- * Plan conferences, forums, symposia or panel discussions, or invite guest speakers (including, in some circumstances, candidates) to campus, to discuss campaign-related issues.

Here are some examples of the kinds of activities that faculty, students, and staff may engage in as individuals on their own time, provided they do not use University resources and do not say or imply they are acting on behalf of the University:

- * Donate money to support or oppose a ballot initiative or political candidate.
- * Act as a campaign volunteer by writing letters, making phone calls, knocking on doors, or distributing flyers in support of or opposition to a candidate or ballot proposal.
- * Organize or attend rallies in support of or opposition to a political candidate or ballot proposal.
- * Write letters to the editor or op-ed pieces relating to a political candidate or ballot initiative.
- * Give speeches and participate in debates on a particular candidate or ballot proposal.
- * Write to elected officials to express personal opinions on a candidate or ballot initiative.

The following types of activities are not permitted under Michigan law:

- * Sending out a mass mailing using University stationery and postage or using a University-provided e-mail address to campaign for or against a ballot initiative or candidate running for office.
- * Using a University copy machine to copy flyers supporting or opposing a ballot initiative or candidate.
- * Conducting a political campaign from a University office or other University facility, or otherwise using University resources, such as a University-provided telephone, computer, e-mail address, etc., to conduct such a campaign.
- * Purporting to carry on a political campaign in the name of the University.

Further information, including frequently asked questions and answers, has been posted to the University's website at <http://www.umich.edu/~urel/guidelines/>. Please direct additional questions to Maya R. Kobersy in the Office of the Vice President and General Counsel at (734) 764-0304 or mkobersy@umich.edu <<mailto:mkobersy@umich.edu>>.

Sincerely,

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