

POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT

Political activity of unclassified State employees is governed by Connecticut General Statute. To avoid conflicts with the law, employees who are considering running for political office must notify the Human Resources Office prior to initiating a campaign to determine if State laws apply and to determine whether an accommodation will be needed or possible. Following is an abbreviated summary of the State's statutory limits, which apply to unclassified employees. Refer to Connecticut General Statute 5-266a to 5-266d for the complete text as well as Sec.5-267 and Sec. 5-268.

No person employed may:

- Use his official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for office;
- Directly or indirectly coerce, attempt to coerce, command, or advise a State or local officer or employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency, or person for political purpose.

A person employed in classified service retains the right to vote as he/she chooses and to express his/her opinions on political subjects and candidates and shall be free to participate actively in political management and campaigns; except that no such employee shall engage in such activity while on duty or within any period of time during which such employee is expected to perform services for which he/she receives compensation from the State.

No such employee shall utilize State funds, supplies, vehicles, or facilities to secure support for or oppose any candidate, party, or issue. Any person employed in the classified State service may be a candidate for a State or municipal office in any political partisan election.

Any person employed in the classified State service who leaves such service to accept a full-time elective municipal office shall be granted a personal leave of absence without pay from his/her State employment for not more than two consecutive terms of office or for a period of four years, whichever is shorter. Any person employed in the classified State service who accepts an elective State office shall resign from such employment upon taking such office.

Various governing bodies depending on whether the State or Federal law is impacted investigate any complaints of violations. However, the resulting penalties can be extensive under either law, including discipline, dismissal, fines, imprisonment, or loss of Federal funding.

Briefly, Federal law also prohibits much of what is prohibited by State law. Indeed both laws prohibit using official authority for influencing elections and coercing State or local employees to pay or contribute anything of value for a political purpose. However, they do differ on one point: State law permits candidacy for office while Federal law prohibits candidacy.

For an in depth discussion of the relationship between the Hatch Act and Connecticut State law, please refer to the Attorney General's May 30, 1995

Memorandum to Agency Heads. Particular note should be made of the sections that address the solicitation of contributions for political purposes.

With the exception of the Hatch Act, all of the statutory references quoted above are in the State Personnel Act. The sections are included in this General Letter for your information and guidance.