

# POLITICAL ACTIVITIES



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## POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND THE MILITARY

As a military member, you are both encouraged and expected to be a responsible and politically conscious citizen. Every Air Force installation has a program to encourage voter registration and facilitate voting by absentee ballot.

However, your participation in active political campaigning and ability to hold elected office are specifically limited by federal law and AFI 51-508, *Political Activities, Free Speech and Freedom of Assembly of Air Force Personnel*

### **PERMITTED ACTIVITIES:**

Air Force members may:

- Register to vote, and vote,
- express a **personal opinion** on political candidates and issues, but not as a representative of the Armed Forces,
- Promote and encourage others to vote so long as such encouragement does not constitute use of their official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- Attend political meetings or rallies as a spectator when not in uniform
- Join a political club and attend its meetings when not in uniform
- Serve as an election official if the position is nonpartisan, is performed while not in uniform, and has the prior approval of SECAF,
- Sign a petition for specific legislative action or to qualify a candidate for a ballot, if done as a private citizen and not as a representative of the Armed Forces,
- Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing a member's personal views concerning public issues, if those views do not attempt to promote a partisan political cause,
- Display a political sticker on a member's vehicle (but not a large political sign, banner or poster) or wear a political button or t-shirt when not in uniform and not on duty,
- Participate fully in the Federal Voting Assistance Program,
- Write a personal letter, not for publication, expressing preference for a specific political candidate or cause, if not part of an organized letter-writing campaign on behalf of a partisan political cause or candidate.

### **PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES:**

Members who engage in any of the prohibited political activities specified in AFI 51-508 are subject to prosecution under Article 92 of the UCMJ. Specifically, AFI 51-508 states that Air Force members may NOT:

- Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election or affect its outcome,
- Solicit votes for a particular candidate or issue. Require or solicit political contributions,
- Run for or hold elected civil office, except as narrowly allowed by AFI 51-508,
- Participate in partisan political campaigns or conventions, or make public speeches in the course of such activity,
- Write or publish partisan political articles signed or authorized by the member for soliciting votes for or against a partisan political party or candidate,
- Serve as an officer for or sponsor of a partisan political club,
- Speak to a partisan political gathering to promote a partisan political party or candidate,
- Participate in any radio, television, or other program or group discussion as an advocate of a partisan political party or candidate,
- Conduct a political opinion survey for a partisan political group,
- Distribute partisan political literature,
- Perform clerical or other duties for a partisan political committee or candidate during a campaign, on an election day, or after an election day during the process of closing out a campaign,
- March or ride in a partisan political parade,
- Participate in any organized effort to transport voters to the polls, if it is organized by or associated with a partisan political party or candidate,
- Attend, as an official representative of the Armed Forces, partisan political events, even without actively participating,
- Make campaign contributions to a partisan political candidate,
- Display a large political sign, banner, or poster on the top or side of a member's vehicle or one visible to the public at one's residence on a military installation, even if that residence is part of a privatized housing development,
- Sell tickets for or actively promote political dinners and other fundraising events,
- Use contemptuous words concerning the President, the Vice-President, Congress, the Secretary of Defense, the military secretaries, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the Governor and legislature of Colorado. Commissioned Officers found to violate this regulation may be subject to Court-Martial under Article 88 of the UCMJ.

*The information provided in this document is meant for the sole use of Active Duty service members, retirees, and their families. The information is general in nature and meant only to provide a brief overview of various legal matters. Rights and responsibilities vary widely according to the facts and circumstances in each case. Laws can vary across states, services, and civilian jurisdictions. Do not rely upon the general restatements of background information presented here without discussing your specific situation with a legal professional.*