

August 18, 2020

Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership Officer

Political Activities on School Property

To: All Staff

From: Anissa Dennis, Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership Officer

The following procedures govern political campaign activities and political expression on school property:

- Any employee of the school system, acting solely in his or her individual capacity, may participate freely in politics, political campaigns, and the free expression of political opinions. However, employees of the school system may not engage in political activities while on the job during working hours or at HCPSS-sponsored activities. This includes but is not limited to:
  - The wearing of political buttons or T-shirts in support of a particular political party or candidate.
  - The display or dissemination of political materials.
  - The display of political buttons, signs, clothing, etc. in the background of a virtual meeting, synchronous instruction or any virtual activity during work hours or at HCPSS-sponsored activities.
  - Making speeches for a partisan political organization or candidate for public office.
- A person may not campaign or solicit support for a political candidate on school property except:
  - On primary or general election days and then, only at school facilities that are designated as polling locations.
  - When a political event sponsored by a community organization is held on school property in compliance with Policy 10020, Use of School Facilities.
- A person may not use any Board of Education property or symbol (e.g. logo, signage) in any political campaign material or activities if the impression given is one of endorsement by the school or school system. This would include wearing any school system uniform or clothing identifying the wearer as an HCPSS employee while campaigning.
- Campaign literature or other information that endorses or advocates for a candidacy may not be distributed on school property during school hours or at a school-sponsored activity.
- School system resources and equipment, including but not limited to Howard County Public School System email, may not be used to distribute campaign literature or information, or to solicit support for a political candidate or political party.
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- Instructional activities where issues or political events are discussed as part of a broad-

based instructional format are permitted.

- Special school-sponsored programs where each candidate for an office is given an equitable opportunity to present his/her candidacy may be conducted in accordance with Board of Education Policy 8060, Resource Speakers and Policy 8050, Teaching of Controversial Issues.
- Candidates for political office may place paid political ads in high school student newspapers.

Note: Student activities are governed by Policy 9020, Students' Rights and Responsibilities.

AD/cf