

University Policy 2106: Political Activity

Category: Community Expectations

Subcategory: Individual Rights

Covered Individuals: University Employees

Responsible Executive: Vice President for Government Relations and External Affairs

Policy Custodian: Government Relations and External Affairs, Vice President for Government Relations and External Affairs

Last Revised: 2025/10/28

Previous USU Policy Number: 506

2106.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Utah State University (University or USU) values and encourages community and civic engagement and supports individuals' active participation in public affairs during their personal time and with their personal resources.

The purpose of this Policy is to set clear expectations and requirements, in compliance with federal and state laws governing higher education institutions and tax-exempt organizations, for (1) University employees' political and civic activities in the employee's professional and personal capacities; (2) the University's political advocacy and campaign-related activities; and (3) the use of University facilities for political activities.

This Policy is not intended to limit the rights of students, faculty, or staff to express personal opinions on matters of public concern or to engage in political activity in their individual capacities and as private citizens, provided that they clearly indicate that they are not representing the University, or speaking for, or on behalf of, the University.

2106.2 POLICY

2.1 Legislative and Other Communications on Behalf of the University

Only the President and their designees are authorized to speak or issue statements on behalf of the University. See USU Policy 2105: Free Expression and Assembly. Unless provided in this Policy or USU Policy 2105, an employee does not speak for the University.

Consistent with Executive Order 2018-1 and Utah Board of Higher Education (UBHE) Policy R250, only the President, Provost, and up to two legislative liaisons appointed by the President are authorized to engage in Legislative Communications at any time for any reason. The President has appointed the Vice President for Government and External Affairs to serve as the legislative liaison for the University. The Office of Government and External Affairs coordinates all University contacts with public officials and candidates for political office, including University lobbying and advocacy activities.

Additionally, the President may authorize other University employees to engage in Legislative Communications to explain technical concepts or provide subject-matter expertise. All engagement with

state legislators shall comply with UBHE Policy R250.

Unless authorized under this Policy, University employees in the employee's official capacity may not engage in Legislative Communications on behalf of USU.

2.2 Political Activity by the Employees

A University employee who engages in political activities must do so outside of work hours or while on approved leave. University employees and students are prohibited from using institutional resources, such as, but not limited to, paid work-time, funds, vehicles, telephone, duplicating equipment, office supplies, intercampus mail, mailing lists, or other supplies for political activities or purposes. Further, a University employee may not use University email accounts, social media accounts, University letterhead, or other University communication channels to engage in political activities, including legislative communications.

Specifically, a University employee is prohibited from using the employee's University email account:

1. to engage in Legislative Communications, unless authorized under section 2.1 of this Policy;
2. to advocate for or against an initiative or proposed initiative, a referendum or proposed initiative, a bond or proposed bond, or any ballot proposition, except for the President and individuals designated by the President;
3. to solicit a campaign contribution;
4. to advocate for or solicit support for public policy initiatives or similar causes, except for the President and individuals designated by the President; or
5. for other political purposes unrelated to the employee's role and responsibility at the University.

When engaging in political activities using a personal email account, personal social media account, or other communication account, a University employee must make it clear that the employee is speaking on the employee's own behalf and not on behalf of the University.

Consistent with the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), an email sent in violation of this Policy is a record and may be subject to disclosure under GRAMA. See Utah Code Sections 63G-2-103 and 20A-11-1205.

2.3 Political Activity by the University

The University will not, through its officials or units, participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office. See 26 U.S.C. § 501 (c)(3). Additionally, lobbying activity undertaken by the University shall not represent a substantial part of its activities. See 26 U.S.C. § 501 (h).

2.4 Candidate, Campaign, or Private Use of University Facilities for Political Activities

The University, through University Event Services, regularly permits the rental of University facilities for private events at fair market value. In the case of campaign-related activities, the University will make its facilities available for rent to candidates, campaigns, and other interested parties on an equal basis in accordance with established University Policy and subject to availability. The University will make its facilities available to registered political parties to use for political party activities, without discrimination, in accordance with Utah Code Section 20A-8-404.

2.5 Training

All employees are required to complete annual training on political activity. Failure to complete this training may result in disciplinary action under USU Policy 3001: Setting Expectations and Managing Performance or USU Policy 4006: Academic Due Process: Sanctions and Hearing Procedures, as applicable.

2106.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Employees

University employees must comply with this Policy and complete all required training on political activity.

3.2 Supervisors

Supervisors must ensure reporting employees complete required training and enforce the requirements of this policy.

2106.4 REFERENCES

- [Utah Code Title 63G, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act](#)
- [Utah Code Section 20A-11-205](#)
- [Utah Code Section 53H-1-504](#)
- [Utah Code Section 63A-17-904](#)
- [USHE Policy R250](#)
- Internal Revenue Service Code Title 26, Section 501 (c)(3), Exemption from tax on corporations, certain trusts, etc.
- Internal Revenue Service Code Title 26, Section 501 (h), Exemption from tax on corporations, certain trusts, etc.

2106.5 RELATED USU POLICIES

- [Policy 2105: Free Expression and Assembly](#)
- [Policy 4002: Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities](#)
- [Policy 5101: University Social Media Accounts](#)
- [Policy 5207: Institutional Email Service](#)
- [USU Brand Standards](#)

2106.6 DEFINITIONS

- **Legislative Communications** means an individual in the individual's official capacity, either directly or indirectly, communicating with a legislator to influence legislative action. Legislative Communications does not include: (i) requests to a legislator to sponsor legislation; (ii) communications between or within the University or other agencies of the Executive Branch; (iii) testifying before a legislative body, including a legislative committee or task force; (iv) answering a legislator's question; (v) communications with legislative staff; or (vi) communications required by law.

Information below is not included as part of the contents of the official Policy. It is provided only as a convenience for readers/users and may be changed at any time by persons authorized by the President.

RESOURCES

Contacts

- Government Relations and External Affairs, devin.wiser@usu.edu
- Office of General Counsel, legal@usu.edu

POLICY HISTORY

Original issue date: 2024/06/12

Last revised: 2025/10/28

Next scheduled review date: 2027/06/01

Previous revision dates: N/A