

**Public Disclosure Commission
Guidelines for School Districts in Election Campaigns**

Persons	Permitted	Not Permitted	General Considerations
Principals or Building Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May inform staff during non-work hours¹ of opportunities to participate in campaign activities.² • Are encouraged to communicate to staff the difference between acceptable and unacceptable activities related to a ballot measure. • In the course of normal publications for the school, may distribute an objective and fair presentation of the facts³ based on and expanded upon the information⁴ prepared by the district in accordance with the normal and regular conduct of the school and the district.⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not pressure or coerce employees to participate in campaign activities. • Shall not use internal memoranda solely for the purpose of informing employees of meetings supporting or opposing ballot measures. • Shall not coordinate informational activities with campaign efforts, in a manner that makes the district appear to be supporting or opposing a ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been communications with staff and with union representatives regarding the prohibition on the use of the school's internal mail or email system to support or oppose a ballot measure? • Is the distribution of this information consistent with the normal practices of the school (such as kid mail, newsletters, websites, or some other format)?

¹ Districts may set the definition of work hours for their employees. For example, to the extent that a district defines the lunch hour as a non-work hour, activities to support or oppose a candidate or a ballot measure that do not use public resources and that are held away from district facilities are permitted during the lunch hour.

² RCW 42.17.680(2) provides that “[n]o employer or labor organization may discriminate against an officer or employee in the terms or conditions of employment for (a) the failure to contribute to, (b) the failure in any way to support or oppose, or (c) in any way supporting or opposing a candidate, ballot proposition, political party, or political committee.”

³ Throughout these guidelines, the clause “objective and fair presentation of the facts” means that in addition to presenting the facts, the materials should present accurately the costs and other anticipated impacts of a ballot measure.

⁴ For the purposes of these guidelines, “information” refers to the documents prepared, printed, and mailed districtwide by the district’s central administration solely for the purposes of informing residents regarding an upcoming ballot measure. The district and a school may continue to distribute information consistent with the customary practices of the district and a school, including but not limited to kid mail, newsletters, websites, and multi-lingual documents. These publications may continue, but if they discuss the ballot measure, the information should be an objective and fair presentation of the facts.

⁵ For the purpose of these guidelines, the term “normal and regular” is defined in WAC 390-05-273 and clarified further by WAC 390-05-271.

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Principals or Building Administrators (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May speak at community forums and clubs to present factual and objective information on a ballot measure during regular work hours. • May encourage staff and members of the public to vote, as long as such encouragement routinely occurs for other elections. • May respond to questions regarding a ballot measure if such activity is consistent with his or her normal and regular duties. • May wear campaign buttons or similar items while on the job if the district's policy generally permits employees to wear political buttons. • May engage in campaign activities on their own time, during non-work hours and without using public resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not use public resources to operate a speakers' bureau in a manner that may be viewed as promoting a ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the information provided an objective and fair presentation of the facts? • Is the activity consistent with the school's normal and regular course of business? • Do the materials accurately present the costs and other anticipated impacts of a ballot measure?
PTSAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May use school facilities for meetings supporting or opposing a ballot measure to the extent that the facilities are made available on an equal access, nondiscriminatory basis, and it is part of the normal and regular activity of the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not use school facilities to produce materials that support or oppose a ballot measure, unless the district offers printing services on an equal access, nondiscriminatory basis to others. 	

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PTSAs (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May print and distribute a separate newsletter advocating support for the ballot measure so long as no district resources are used (such as kid mail, newsletters, websites, or some other format). • May remind voters of upcoming election dates in the PTSA newsletter or in their part of the school newsletter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not print and distribute materials promoting the ballot measure in the school newsletter. • Shall not use a school or district-sponsored event to promote or oppose a candidate or a ballot measure. 	
School Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May collectively vote to support or oppose a ballot measure at a properly noticed public meeting, where opponents of the measure are given an equal opportunity to express views.⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not pressure or coerce the superintendent to participate in campaign activities. • Shall not explicitly include passage of a ballot measure in the district's annual goals. 	
School Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May engage in political activities on his or her own time, if no public equipment, vehicle or facility is used. (An elected official may use his or her title, but should clarify that he/she is speaking on his/her own behalf, and not on behalf of the district. If the board has adopted a resolution, the board member can then speak on behalf of the district.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not direct district staff to perform tasks to support or oppose campaign activities or ballot measures. • Shall not use public facilities or resources in engaging in political activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the board member using staff time, a public vehicle, or other public resources? • Has the board adopted a resolution? If yes, the board member can speak on behalf of the district. If not, has the board member made it clear that he or she is not speaking on behalf of the district?

⁶RCW 42.17.130(1) provides that action may be "taken at an open public meeting by members of an elected legislative body or by an elected board, council, or commission of a special purpose district including, but not limited to, fire districts, public hospital districts, library districts, park districts, port districts, public utility districts, school districts, sewer districts, and water districts, to express a collective decision, or to actually vote upon a motion, proposal, resolution, order, or ordinance, or to support or oppose a ballot proposition so long as (a) any required notice of the meeting includes the title and number of the ballot proposition, and (b) members of the legislative body, members of the board, council, or commission of the special purpose district, or members of the public are afforded an approximately equal opportunity for the expression of an opposing view;"

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Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may originate school projects for credit that promote or oppose candidates or ballot measures. • Students may use public resources to carry out school projects promoting or opposing ballot measures, to the extent that such resources are regularly and routinely made available for other student projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student school projects supporting or opposing ballot measures shall not use public resources that are not regularly and routinely made available for other student projects. • Teachers shall not assign school projects to students that require creating or distributing materials to influence an election's outcome. • District employees and officials shall not use student projects to influence an election's outcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the school project student-initiated? • Is the district using the student project to influence the outcome of an election?
Superintendents or Their Designees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May speak at community forums and clubs to present an objective and fair presentation of the facts on a ballot measure during regular work hours.⁷ • May fully participate in campaign activities, including meeting with citizens' campaign committees to plan strategies, during non-work hours and without the use of public resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not use public resources to operate a speakers' bureau in a manner that may be viewed as promoting a ballot measure. • Shall not use public resources to promote or defeat a candidate or ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the superintendent using public resources in a manner that promotes or opposes a candidate or a ballot measure? • Does the presentation accurately present the costs and other anticipated impacts of a ballot measure?

⁷ Districts may set the definition of work hours for their employees. For example, to the extent that a district defines the lunch hour as a non-work hour, activities to support or oppose a candidate or a ballot measure that do not use public resources and that are held away from district facilities are permitted during the lunch hour.

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<p>Superintendents or Their Designees (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May inform staff during non-work hours of opportunities to participate in campaign activities. • May respond to questions regarding a ballot measure if such activity is consistent with his or her normal and regular duties. • May wear campaign buttons or similar items while on the job if the district's policy generally permits employees to wear political buttons. • May place window signs or bumper stickers on their privately-owned cars, even if those cars are parked on school property during working hours. • Are encouraged to communicate to staff the difference between acceptable and unacceptable activities related to a ballot measure. • May encourage staff and members of the public to vote, as long as such encouragement routinely occurs for other elections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not pressure or coerce employees to participate in campaign activities. • Shall not use district resources to organize the distribution of campaign materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the district have a policy permitting employees to wear political buttons?

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<p>Teachers or Other Employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May speak at community forums and clubs to present an objective and fair presentation of the facts on a ballot measure during regular work hours. • May inform staff during non-work hours of opportunities to participate in campaign activities. • May engage in campaign activities on their own time, during non-work hours and without using public resources. • May respond to questions regarding a ballot measure if such activity is consistent with his or her normal and regular duties. • May wear campaign buttons or similar items while on the job if the district's policy generally allows employees to wear political buttons. • May, during non-work hours, make available campaign materials to employees in lunchrooms and break rooms, which are used only by staff or other authorized individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not use work hours or public resources to promote or oppose a candidate or ballot measure (such as gathering signatures, distributing campaign materials, arranging speaking engagements, coordinating phone banks, or fundraising). • Shall not pressure or coerce other employees to participate in campaign activities. • Shall not use district resources to organize the distribution of campaign materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the presentations accurately present the costs and other anticipated impacts of a ballot measure? • Is the employee acting on his or her own time, during non-work hours? • Is the employee using public resources in a matter that promotes or defeats a candidate or a ballot measure? • Does the district have a policy permitting employees to wear political buttons?

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Teachers or Other Employees (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May place window signs or bumper stickers on their cars, even if those cars are parked on school property during working hours. • May encourage staff and members of the public to vote, as long as such encouragement routinely occurs for other elections. 		
Union Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May, during non-work hours, make available campaign materials to union members in lunchrooms and break rooms, which are used only by staff or other authorized individuals. • May distribute campaign materials at union-sponsored meetings. • May post campaign materials on a bulletin board, if such a board is in an area that is not accessible to the general public and if such activity is consistent with the district's policy and the collective bargaining agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall not use the school's internal mail or email system to communicate campaign-related information, including endorsements. • Shall not distribute promotional materials in classrooms or other public areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are campaign materials made available only in those areas used solely by staff or other authorized individuals? • Does such distribution occur during non-work hours?

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Equipment and Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District employees, in the course of their employment, may use equipment (including but not limited to projectors and computers) to make an objective and fair presentation of the facts at community forums and clubs. • District employees, in the course of their employment, may produce information that is an objective and fair presentation of the facts using public resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public resources (including but not limited to internal mail systems, email systems, copiers, telephone) shall not be used to support or oppose a candidate or ballot measure, whether during or outside of work hours. • Citizens' campaign committees and other community groups shall not use district equipment (including but not limited to internal mail systems, projectors, computers, and copiers) to prepare materials for meetings regarding ballot measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the presentations fairly and objectively present the costs and other anticipated impacts of a ballot measure?
Meeting Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District meeting facilities, including audio visual equipment, may be used by campaign committees for activities on the same terms and conditions available to other community groups, subject to the provisions of the district's policy. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can community groups typically use school facilities? • Are facilities made available to all groups on the same terms? • Has the district adopted a policy regarding the distribution of campaign materials on district property?

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Lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists of names (such as district vendors or parents) that a district has obtained or created in the course of transacting its regular public business are subject to public disclosure requirements; thus, unless otherwise exempt, the lists must be released subject to public records requests. • Districts may charge a pre-established fee to cover the costs of providing copies of such lists on an equal access, nondiscriminatory basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts shall not sell copies of such lists (though they may charge a pre-established fee to recover the costs of providing copies of the lists). • If a list is generally available as a public record, it cannot be denied to a person or group on the grounds that it might be used in a campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the list obtained or created in the course of the district transacting its public business? • Are the fees charged no greater than necessary to cover the costs of providing copies? • Has the district complied with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and district policy in responding to any public record requests?
Voting Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District personnel may encourage staff and members of the public to vote, as long as such encouragement routinely occurs for other elections. • Public facilities may be used to register people to vote and to do periodic poll checking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts shall not pressure or coerce employees to vote. • Districts shall not organize an effort to encourage staff to wear campaign buttons or display campaign materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the activity related to providing voting information for elections, as opposed to advocating for or against a particular candidate or ballot measure?

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<p>District Publications (Specific to Elections)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts may develop an objective and fair presentation of the facts regarding district needs and the anticipated impact of a ballot measure, and may distribute it in the district’s customary manner. This information⁸ may be printed in various languages and communicated in other formats as required by the ADA. • In the course of regular publications for the district, the district may distribute an objective and fair presentation of the facts for each ballot measure in accordance with the normal and regular conduct of the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts shall not distribute election-related information in a manner that targets specific subgroups. Targeting does not refer to mailing information to district constituencies such as parents, families within a service region, community leaders, or some other group, or to the district’s regular distribution list to provide information in a manner that is consistent with the normal and regular conduct of the district. • Districts shall not publicize information supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the information provide an objective and fair presentation of the facts? • Is the timing, format, and style, including tone and tenor, of the information presented in a manner that is normal and regular for the district? • Is the information distributed in a manner that is normal and regular for the district? • Do the materials accurately present the costs and other anticipated impacts of a ballot measure?

⁸ For the purposes of these guidelines, “information” refers to the documents prepared, printed, and mailed districtwide by the district’s central administration solely for the purposes of informing residents regarding an upcoming ballot measure. The district and a school may continue to distribute information consistent with the customary practices of the district and a school, including but not limited to kid mail, newsletters, websites, and multi-lingual documents. These publications may continue, but if they discuss the ballot measure, the information should be an objective and fair presentation of the facts.

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District Publications (Specific to Elections) (continued)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the district typically distribute information by kid mail, newsletters, websites, or some other format?
District Publications (Regular)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Districts may include all or part of the information regarding district needs and the anticipated impacts of a ballot measure in the district's regular publications, such as district and school newsletters. (For example, a school newsletter may specifically describe the projects and/or programs planned for that school.) Districts may inform staff and/or parents of community meetings related to ballot measures if other such information is normally published in a newsletter or community calendar, and if both those supporting or opposing a ballot measure have the opportunity to appear on the calendar or in the newsletter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Districts shall not use internal memoranda or other district publications to encourage employees to participate in campaign activities. Districts shall not publish materials supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the district routinely distribute such information? Does the district normally inform staff and/or parents of community activities and meetings?

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District Publications (Regular) (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts may factually report school board support for a ballot measure, so long as it is the normal and regular conduct for the district. (For example, a community newsletter that ordinarily reports on board actions may report that the board adopted a resolution supporting the district’s ballot measure.) • Districts may thank citizens for their support after an election in district publications. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the information presented in an objective and fair manner? • Is the district engaging in significantly different activities during the time period immediately prior to the ballot measure compared to all other times of the school year?
Reader Boards/Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information encouraging staff and members of the public to vote, or providing the dates of upcoming elections such as “vote on February ___”, may be posted, as long as such encouragement is customarily posted for elections other than just a district ballot measure. • Districts may thank citizens on their reader boards for their support after an election. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts shall not display a “vote schools” sign or other promotional messages on reader boards or posters. • Signs advocating for or against candidates or ballot measures shall not be posted on district property in any area accessible to the general public or in classrooms. 	

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Reader Boards/Poster (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union representatives/employees may post campaign materials on a bulletin board, if such a board is in an area that is only accessible to staff or other authorized individuals and if such activity is consistent with the district's policy and collective bargaining agreements. • May post objective and fair information at a school or at a future school site regarding anticipated improvements to be funded by a ballot measure that is specific to that school or site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly owned vehicles shall not be used to carry or display political material. 	
Surveys and Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts may conduct surveys and/or other community research, including demographic questions, to determine the community's priorities, public perception of district performance, and/or to inform the community about district programs and policies. • Districts may conduct community research (including but not limited to the use of questionnaires, surveys, workshops, focus groups, and forums) to determine the community's priorities for both programs and/or facilities and their associated total costs and projected dollars per thousand assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts shall not conduct surveys to determine what taxation level the public would support. • Districts shall not conduct surveys designed to shore up support or opposition for a ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the school board passed a resolution authorizing a measure to be placed on the ballot? (If so, actions may be more closely scrutinized.) • Does the election-related survey target specific subgroups?

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<p>Surveys and Research (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surveys and/or other community research can be conducted before or after the school board has approved a resolution to place a ballot measure on the ballot. However, research conducted after the adoption of the resolution may be subject to greater scrutiny. • Districts may publish survey results if it is consistent with the normal and regular conduct of the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts shall not target registered voters or other specific subgroups of district residents in conducting their election-related surveys. • Districts shall not use survey results in a manner designed to support or oppose a candidate or ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the survey or community research consistent with normal and regular activities of the district?
<p>Technology (websites, emails, computerized calling systems)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A district may develop an objective and fair presentation of the facts and post that information on its website, including information regarding district needs and the anticipated impacts of a ballot measure. This information may be reformatted so that it is consistent with the manner in which the district customarily presents information on its website. • District websites may permit viewers to make selections to learn about the anticipated impacts of a ballot measure for a specific school, or otherwise allow readers to explore issues in greater or lesser detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District computers, email systems, telephones, and other information technology systems shall not be used to aid a campaign for or against a candidate or ballot measure. • Electronic communication systems shall not be used to generate or forward information that supports or opposes a candidate or ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the materials developed an objective and fair presentation of the facts? • Is the district engaging in significantly different activities during the time period immediately prior to the ballot measure compared to all other times of the school year?

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Technology (websites, emails, computerized calling systems) (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts may update the information on their websites in a manner that is customary for the district. • Staff may respond to inquiries regarding a ballot measure in an objective and fair manner, via email or by telephone if it is part of their normal and regular duties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District websites shall not be used for the purposes of supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the materials accurately present the costs and other anticipated impacts of a ballot measure? • Has there been communications with staff and with union representatives regarding the prohibition on the use of the school's technology to support or oppose a ballot measure?

Note on Timing of Activities: A particular activity may be subject to the scrutiny of the Public Disclosure Commission depending in part on whether it is a part of the “normal and ordinary” conduct of a district or a school. Generally, activities that occur after a school board has passed a resolution authorizing a measure to be placed on the ballot will be subject to greater scrutiny by the Public Disclosure Commission than those occurring before such a resolution has been passed.

Note on District Policies: The application of these guidelines is also subject to each district’s own policies as adopted by the school board.