



Voting Do's & Don'ts for Members of the Armed Forces

During an election year, many active duty military members may wish to get involved in campaigning for their favorite candidate. What are the limits to their participation? Department of Defense Directive 1344.10, which covers Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces on Active Duty, says that an Active Duty member of the Armed Forces:

- May register, vote, and express a personal opinion on political candidates and issues, but not as a representative of the Armed Forces
- May promote and encourage others to exercise their voting franchise, if such promotion does not constitute use of their official authority or influence to interfere with the outcome of any election
- May join a partisan or nonpartisan political club and attend its meetings when not in uniform
- May serve as an election official, if such service is not as a representative of a partisan political party, does not interfere with the performance of military duties, is performed when not in uniform, and the Secretary concerned has given prior approval
- May sign a petition for a specific legislative action or a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot, if the signing does not obligate the member to engage in partisan political activity and is done as a private citizen and not as a representative of the Armed Forces
- May write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing the member's personal views on public issues or political candidates, if such action is not part of an organized letter-writing campaign or a solicitation of votes for or against a political party or partisan political cause or candidate
- May make monetary contributions to a political organization, party, or committee favoring a particular candidate or slate of candidates
- May display a political bumper sticker on the member's private vehicle

The same Defense Directive 1344.10 says that Active Duty members of the Armed Forces MAY NOT engage in certain activities. Members of the Armed Forces:

- May not use official authority or influence to interfere with an election, affect the course or outcome of an election, solicit votes for a particular candidate or issue, or require or solicit political contributions from others
- May not be a candidate for civil office in Federal, State or local government, or engage in public or organized soliciting others to become partisan candidates for nomination or election to civil offices
- May not participate in partisan political management or campaigns, or make public speeches in the concerns thereof
- May not solicit or receive a campaign contribution from another member of the Armed Forces or from a civilian officer or employee of the United States for promoting a political objective or cause.
- May not speak before a partisan political gathering of any kind for promoting a partisan political party or candidate
- May not use contemptuous words against officeholders described in 10 USC888
- May not perform clerical or other duties for a partisan committee during a campaign or on an election day
- May not solicit or otherwise engage in fundraising activities in Federal offices or facilities, including military reservations, for any political cause or candidate
- May not sell tickets for or otherwise actively promote political dinners and similar fundraising events
- May not allow or cause to be published political articles signed or written by the member that solicit votes for or against a political party or candidate
- May not serve in any official capacity or sponsor a political club
- May not participate in any media or group discussions as a partisan advocate
- May not conduct a political opinion survey
- May not march or ride in a partisan parade
- May not display a large political sign, banner or poster on a private vehicle (bumper stickers are allowed)
- May not participate in any partisan effort to provide voters with transportation to the polls

- May not attend partisan political events as an official representative of the Armed Forces or while in uniform.

Please note, this list is only meant as a guide. If you have specific questions regarding what you can and cannot do, consult DoD Directive 1344.10 or your Base Legal Office.

Source:

Federal Voting Assistance Program
Department of Defense
Washington Headquarters Services
1155 Defense Pentagon
Washington DC 20301-1155

THE MOST IMPORTANT “DO”

VOTE!