



**Responsible Office:** Department of Government Affairs

**BOARD POLICY 1310**  
**POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS**

**PURPOSE**

The Board of Trustees ("Board") is dedicated to civic engagement and supports individual and community participation in the political process. This includes educating our students as well as policy makers and participating in the public dialogue on policy issues where appropriate. However, during school hours no student or other person shall be subjected to partisan political activities on Washoe County School District ("District") property or at District-sponsored events.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. "Contribution" means the following:
  - a. Any direct or indirect payment, loan, advance or gift of money, services or anything of value; and
  - b. Any non-monetary ("in-kind") contribution, including goods or services, provided to benefit a campaign such as the use of office space, equipment and materials.
2. "Ballot Initiative" means a non-partisan election of a matter that does not relate to a candidate for office.

**POLICY**

1. As a tax-supported institution, it is the position of the Board of Trustees that no District resources, including buildings, materials, or supplies, be used to support, endorse, or oppose any candidate, ballot question, initiative or petition or any other matter currently before any local government agency (such as city and county commissions or planning and zoning boards), or any matter being considered by the Nevada State Legislature without the permission of the Board of Trustees.
  - a. The District may expend reasonable amounts of resources to apprise voters of facts pertinent to an election, bond issue or referendum that may affect the District.

- b. No District modes of communication shall be utilized by or on behalf of political candidates, political organizations, District employees, students, contractors, volunteers or visitors.
  - c. Funds the District receives for educational purposes may not be used to support political activities.
2. Guidelines for Political Activities
- a. Distribution of internal or external informational materials to students, through students to parents/guardians, to parents/guardians, or to faculty and staff, shall be done in accordance with Board Policy 1140, Distribution and Display of Information and Materials to Students and Staff, and in compliance with this Board Policy.
  - b. Any signage that is displayed on District property that is, or becomes, political in nature must be removed or covered. Political signage is defined as any sign indicating support for an individual candidate, ballot question, or political matter, or reasonably resembling any signage of that nature as determined by the Superintendent or his/her designee.
  - c. This policy is not intended to infringe upon any individual's right to support a particular candidate or participate in a political campaign in their private time. Individuals remain entirely free to become involved in the election process as long as such involvement does not involve the District either overtly or impliedly.
3. Staff Guidelines for Political Activities
- a. Staff should use their titles in political correspondence only for purposes of identification and should avoid creating the impression that they are speaking or acting for the District.
  - b. Political activities of staff, including campaigning for candidates or for issues, must be kept separate and distinct from identification with and activities of the District.
  - c. Staff shall not participate, testify or provide public comment on behalf of the District at government meetings (federal, state, and local) without the express permission of the Superintendent or the Superintendent's Designee. Employees may participate in such activities during their personal time but shall make it explicit that any comments are not being made on behalf of the District in whole or any subdivision of the District.
  - d. Staff Running for or Holding Political Office.
    - i. While the District supports an individual's right to run for and hold public office, employees who are seeking, or who have been

elected or appointed to public office, shall not conduct any business related to these activities while on duty, to include during normal work/contract hours.

- ii. The District will make every attempt to enable an employee to run for or hold public office, within the requirements established by the collective bargaining agreement between the District and the employee association, as applicable.

#### 4. Permissible Activities

- a. Candidates for political office may be invited to speak to students at school or at school sponsored events only if they are resource speakers for a classroom activity that is a legitimate part of the regular instructional program and prior approval has been granted by the Principal. If a political candidate is permitted to speak, equal opportunity shall be afforded to other candidates running for the same office.
- b. Instructional discussion of current events, which includes historical and current political races, elections, and candidates is permissible when used for instructional purposes and delivered in a fair, unbiased fashion and in alignment with the Nevada Academic Content Standards and other District policies.
- c. Certain nonpartisan political activities (such as properly organized voter registration activities, voter education programs, and candidate debates) may be permissible on District property if they do not evidence a preference for or opposition to a political party or to candidates who have taken a particular position. In order to ensure that all legal and District requirements are followed, advance approval for these events must be obtained from (and all materials must be reviewed by) the District's Department of Government Affairs which will, if necessary, provide further guidance to the organizer.
  - i. In addition, an announcement should be made at the beginning of each such event and in any written materials setting forth the following disclaimer of the District:

"The Washoe County School District does not support or oppose any political candidates. The views expressed are those of [the candidate or other partisan political speaker] only. The [organization] is sponsoring this event.

#### 5. The following may not under any circumstances be used for political campaign purpose:

- a. The District's bulk-mailing privilege;

- b. District mailing lists - including the addresses and e-mail addresses of District schools and offices or of faculty or other employees;
  - c. District-provided office supplies, telephones, facsimile machines, copiers, etc.; and/or
  - d. The District's sales tax exemption for purchases of goods and services.
6. Political parties are allowed to form political party organizations on campuses, provided they adhere to the following guidelines:
- a. A political party organization on campus must conform to club regulations of the school or the regulations established by the school for the control of the establishment and operation of clubs;
  - b. No political activity of any kind is to be conducted during class hours;
  - c. Membership must be open to any student who wishes to participate;
  - d. Students are permitted to volunteer for political candidates or campaigns of their choosing to meet academic requirements.
7. The Superintendent shall adopt administrative regulations or procedures necessary to implement the provisions of this policy. This may include, but is not limited to:
- a. Protocols related to the use of District resources;
  - b. Student and classroom activities related to political activity or that may be political in nature;
  - c. Classroom or school visitation of political candidates and/or public office holders;
  - d. Guidelines surrounding political activity by staff; and
  - e. Political signage on District property.

### **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS & ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

1. This policy reflects the goals of the District's Strategic Plan and aligns/complies with the governing documents of the District, to include:
  - a. Administrative Regulation 1310, Political Activity in Schools
  - b. Board Policy 1321, Participation by School Groups in Public Events.
  - c. Board Policy 1140, Distribution and Display of Information and Materials to Students and Staff
  - d. Board Policy 4500, Staff Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Expression

- e. Board Policy 5150, Student Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Expression, and Right to Assemble
- 2. The policy aligns with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS), and specifically:
  - a. NRS 218D, Legislative Measures and Procedures, to include NRS 218D.205, Requests from counties, school districts and cities.
  - b. NRS 281A, Ethics in Government, to include NRS 281A.520, Public officer or employee prohibited from requesting or otherwise causing governmental entity to incur expense or make expenditure to support or oppose ballot question or candidate in certain circumstances.

**REVISION HISTORY**

Date	Revision	Modification
9/9/1997	1.0	Adopted
11/8/2013	1.1	Revised to include NRS 281A under Implementation Guidelines
11/18/2014	2.0	Revised
1/25/2018	2.1	Reviewed by Staff for Potential Revision
3/10/2020	3.0	Revised to clarify language and remove redundancy