

HATCH ACT INFO FOR LETTER CARRIERS

NALC encourages all members to be engaged in a wide range of political activities to advance the letter carrier agenda. However, it is crucial to remember that all active letter carriers, career and non-career alike, are federal employees, and your political activities are governed by The Hatch Act—including online activities that involve social media (for example, Facebook and Twitter) as well as e-mail.

Until 1993, active letter carriers were barred from taking any significant volunteer role for any political campaigns. The primary sentiment behind the law was to protect federal employees from being strong-armed and intimidated into helping their bosses run for re-election. But as times and campaigns changed, many recognized that federal employees were being wrongfully left out of the political process.

So, in 1993, Congress amended The Hatch Act to allow federal employees to take an active part in political campaigns for federal offices. While there are still some restrictions on what federal employees (including you and your fellow active carriers) can do, there is much greater latitude for letter carrier political participation in campaigns for president, the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as for state and local elected officials.

DO's (while off the clock, out of uniform)

Active letter carriers may—on their own time, away from work, out of uniform, and without using a postal vehicle:

- Be candidates for public office in non-partisan elections (that is, elections in which none of the candidates are to be nominated or elected are representing a political party).
- Register and vote.
- Sign and circulate candidate nominating petitions and ballot initiative positions.
- Assist in voter-registration drives.
- Speak and write publicly and otherwise express opinions about candidates, ballot measures, and issues.
- Attend political rallies, meetings, and other events.
- Attend fundraisers and contribute money to political organizations and campaigns.
- Volunteer for political campaigns and encourage others to volunteer.
- Participate in phone-banking and precinct-walking for candidates and ballot measures.
- Display bumper stickers, lawn signs, and other campaign paraphernalia.
- Raise money for the Letter Carrier Political Fund from other NALC members. (Note: Letter carriers while detailed to 204b or other higher-level assignments should not solicit contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund from postal employees who may be viewed as their subordinates.)
- Volunteer, run for, and hold an office in a local or state political party or club.

DON'TS (while on the clock, at the workplace, in uniform, or in a postal vehicle)

Active letter carriers may not—while on the clock, at the workplace, in a postal uniform or in a postal vehicle—engage in any of the otherwise permissible political activities listed in the “Do’s”

above. For example, while on the clock, at the workplace, in a postal uniform, or in a postal vehicle, you may not:

- Send or forward a partisan political e-mail.
- Wear or display any political or campaign material, even as a computer screensaver or desktop wallpaper.
- Circulate partisan political materials to co-workers.
- Sign up electronically to contribute to the Letter Carrier Political Fund or solicit other letter carriers to contribute.

DON'TS (ever)

Active letter carriers may not—even on their own time, away from work, out of uniform, and without using a postal vehicle:

- Use their official titles or positions when engaging in otherwise permissible activities.
- Raise money for partisan political groups or campaigns (except for the Letter Carrier Political Fund), including phone-banking, letter-writing, selling tickets, hosting a fundraiser, inviting people to attend a fundraiser, or allowing your name to be used in a fundraising appeal.
- Otherwise solicit, receive, or handle contributions for a partisan political group or campaign.
- Run for elective office in partisan (party-label) elections (even if you report “No Party Affiliation”).
- Raise money for the Letter Carrier Political Fund from non-NALC members (except from their immediate family members in the same household).

ONLINE (general guidelines for social media and e-mail)

In general, all federal employees may use social media/email and comply with The Hatch Act if they remember the following guidelines:

1. Do not engage in political activity while on duty or in the workplace. (Federal employees are “on duty” when they are in a pay status, other than paid leave, or are representing the government in an official capacity.)
2. Do not engage in political activity in an official capacity at any time.
3. Do not solicit or receive political contributions at any time. (This does NOT include contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund solicited from fellow NALC members while off the clock.)

“Political activity” refers to any activity directed at the success or failure of a political party or partisan political group (collectively referred to as “partisan groups”), or candidate in a partisan race.

Remember: Retirees, spouses, and family members (including NALC Auxiliary members) are not bound by The Hatch Act.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel has updated its Hatch Act Social Media and Email Guidance for federal employees. Letter carriers should review this guidance to avoid inadvertent Hatch Act violations. It can be accessed at <https://osc.gov/Pages/Hatch-Act-Social-Media-and-Email-Guidance.aspx>. Visit www.nalc.org/hatch-act for additional information regarding letter carriers and The Hatch Act.