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| POLICY | BOARD OF EDUCATION OF FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND | | |
| POLITICAL ACTIVITY | | SECTION 314 | |

314.1 Political Activity

The Board of Education (Board) affirms the principle that active participation is required by the individual citizen in our democratic form of government. To the extent allowable by law, Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) employees as citizens have the right and responsibility to vote, serve on juries, act as election judges, discuss political issues, serve the political party of their choice as party worker, delegate or official, campaign for candidates to public office, and campaign for and serve in public office.

FCPS employees, however, have a responsibility to their students not to impose partisan political views in the classroom or to exploit students by the use of political materials, or conduct political activities during the employee's work day. Nothing in this policy will be construed to mean that employees are restricted from conversing with colleagues about political topics during breaks/lunches outside of the presence of students.

The Board affirms that using FCPS resources for political activities is prohibited.

In weighing the importance of employees' First Amendment rights, encouraging the educational component of political advocacy and the responsibility not to unduly impose political views on students, the Board sets forth the following expectations regarding political activities on school premises.

314.2 Political Activities on School Premises

The following activities are permitted during an employee's work time or during school-sponsored activities:

- A. Special programs where each candidate for an office is given an equitable opportunity to present his/her candidacy may be established with the approval of the deputy superintendent or designee.
- B. Instructional activities where issues or political events are discussed as part of a broad-based instructional format.

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| Legal Reference | | | |
| | Maryland Public Ethics Law, §5-506, General Provisions, <i>Annotated Code of Maryland</i> | | |
| Policy History | Reviewed: 2005, 2016 | Adopted: 11/9/05 | Revised: 2/24/16 |

- C. Display of bumper stickers on personal vehicles, provided the content is not obscene or disruptive. FCPS employees who transport students in the regular course of their duties are encouraged to cover a political bumper sticker while on school premises.

314.3 Nonpermissible Political Activities on School Premises During an Employee's Work Time or During School-Sponsored Activities

- A. Soliciting votes or contributions for or against a particular candidate or ballot proposition.
- B. Discussing opinions with students regarding a political candidate or ballot proposition, unless the topic is part of the approved curriculum.
- C. Distributing campaign literature, materials or signs for or against a candidate or ballot proposition.
- D. Soliciting volunteers to assist with a campaign for or against a political candidate or ballot proposition.
- E. Preparing for, organizing or participating in any political meeting, petition, rally or event.
- F. Using school system resources for any political campaign activities including, but not limited to, classroom bulletin boards, facsimile machines, copy machines, printers, scanners, computers or email accounts.¹
- G. Spending FCPS funds to urge voters to vote for or against a candidate or ballot proposition.
- H. Requiring employees to engage in political campaign activities as part of their job duties.
- I. Providing employees with additional compensation or benefits for engaging in political activities.

314.4 Voter Registration Activities

- A. Voter registration materials must be approved by the deputy superintendent or designee; voter registration materials containing information advocating a candidate or identifying a particular candidate may not be distributed on school property during school hours or a school-sponsored activity.
- B. In years with two elections (primary and general), two voter registration drives may be proposed.
- C. Any partisan group (representing a political party or private interest) that may want to sponsor a drive must solicit the participation of others; when a

¹ Cross-reference FCPS Regulation 300-45 *Computers: Staff Use* and FCPS Regulation 400-73 *Computers: Acceptable Use of Digital Networks and Online Resources*

drive is initiated by any partisan group (representing a political party or private interest), all parties will be invited to send representatives as registrars; the registrars will be non-partisan, not currently holding public office as an elected official in national, state, or local government; if registrars of assorted parties are not available, the school visit will be canceled by any of the concerned individuals.

- D. Any group that may want to sponsor a drive must submit a schedule of dates, schools, times, and persons attending to the deputy superintendent or designee for prior written approval.
- E. Any group that may want to sponsor a drive must allow the Board of Education to handle announcements, press release statements, etc., through the deputy superintendent or designee; principals and schools will not be directly contacted.

314.5 Use of FCPS Facilities - Political Activities

- A. FCPS buildings and grounds may be used for non-partisan political debates and issues forums sponsored by FCPS or non-partisan organizations. FCPS buildings or grounds shall not be used for partisan political rallies, political fundraisers, and presentations by candidates for public office or related election activities. FCPS buildings or grounds shall also not be used for partisan activities associated with any issue scheduled to be included on the ballot of the next election. Nothing herein shall serve to restrict the county Board of Elections in the administration of Election Day activities.

There shall be no temporary or permanent signs, banners, or pennants placed in or on FCPS buildings or on FCPS grounds by any group except those associated with activities sponsored by FCPS or the PTA. Two exceptions are:

- (1) Activities carried on in FCPS facilities by the Board of Elections shall be exempt from this restriction.
 - (2) Other groups that use FCPS facilities may place temporary identification signs on FCPS grounds only during the actual hours the FCPS facility is used. At the conclusion of the use of the FCPS facility, the group must remove the signs.
- B. In accordance with FCPS Regulation 400-30 *Community Informational Materials*, students and staff are not to be used for advertising and political information, which includes placing flyers on vehicles on school premises.