



10/21/2020

Guidelines for Political Activity
Office of the General Counsel

With the November election fast approaching, many members of the Michigan Tech community have questions about whether University employees and students can engage in political activity, both on campus and off. All members of the University community have the right to fully engage in political activities on their own time and on their own behalf. However, Michigan Tech and anyone acting on the University's behalf is prohibited by state law from using public resources to support or oppose a candidate or to qualify, support or oppose a ballot initiative.

In practical terms, here's what that means for MTU employees:

- You may wear buttons, shirts and hats that advocate for a political candidate or ballot issue on campus so long as the context does not imply you are acting on behalf of the University. For example, when speaking to a group as a representative of the University, it is not appropriate to wear such items because they could imply University endorsement of your views.
- Posters, flags and similar material advocating for a political candidate or ballot issue may be displayed on campus in the same manner as nonpolitical material so long as the context does not imply University endorsement. For example, you may display such material in your own private office, but not in a front-facing office or community breakroom (unless, e.g., a bulletin board is equally available for all).
- When engaging in political activities on your personal time, do not purport to speak for or campaign on behalf of the University — and do not make statements that could lead a reasonable person to think you are doing so. You should either refrain from stating your University affiliation or, if you include your University affiliation, include a disclaimer stating your affiliation is only for identification purposes and does not indicate University support for or endorsement of your views.
- Do not use your University office, computer, email, phone, listserv or social media account for activity supporting or opposing a political candidate or ballot initiative.
- Do not use University paper, postage, copiers or printer ink for materials supporting or opposing a political candidate or ballot initiative.

The potential penalties for violating these rules are not insignificant. It is a misdemeanor to knowingly violate [Section 57 of Michigan's Campaign Finance Act](#) and you may be subject to fines of up to \$1,000 and imprisonment of up to one year. Further, if Michigan Tech resources are used illegally, the University could be fined \$20,000 or an amount equal to the value of the resources used, whichever is greater.

If you have questions about political activities, please contact Heidi Reid in the Office of the General Counsel at hereid@mtu.edu or 906-487-2229