

Political Activities 7-3.01-K

KNOW your rights and your responsibilities as they pertain to participating in political activities, as presented in the E-PME Study Guide.

Political Activities The military must remain politically neutral and divorced from partisan politics. As a member of the Coast Guard, the manner in which you exercise your political rights is somewhat limited.

Voting Your important right and obligation of governing yourself is exercised by voting for the people who make the laws that affect you...your city and state officials, your representatives, and your President.

While you have the right and duty as an American citizen to vote and voice your opinions concerning political matters, you need to be very careful that your personal opinions and activities are not directly, or by implication, represented as those of the Coast Guard.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Voting Act allows you, your spouse, and dependents to register and vote absentee in Federal office elections. In addition, some states also allow you, your spouse, and dependents to register and vote absentee in state and local elections. Your Voting Officer can assist you and your dependents in proper voting registration and voting materials.

***Monetary
Contributions and
Fundraising***

Specific to monetary contributions and fundraising:

- You may:
 - ▶ Make monetary contributions to a political organization or political committee favoring a particular candidate or slate of candidates.

 - You may NOT:
 - ▶ Solicit or otherwise engage in fundraising activities in Federal offices or facilities, including military reservations, for a partisan political cause or candidate.
 - ▶ Make campaign contributions to a partisan political candidate or to another member of the Armed Forces or an officer or employee of the Federal Government for promoting a political objective or cause.
 - ▶ Solicit or receive a campaign contribution from another member of the Armed Forces or from a civilian officer or employee of the U.S. for promoting a political objective or cause, sell tickets for, or otherwise actively promote political dinners and other such fundraising events.
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***Participation in
Political Groups and
Events***

Specific to your participation in political groups and events as a Coast Guard member:

- You are, when not in uniform, allowed to:
 - ▶ Attend political meetings or rallies as a spectator
 - ▶ Join a political club and attend its meetings.

 - You may NOT:
 - ▶ Participate in partisan political management, campaigns, or conventions or make public speeches in the course of such activity
 - ▶ Serve in any official capacity or be listed as a sponsor of a partisan political club
 - ▶ Conduct a political opinion survey under the sponsorship of a partisan political group or distribute partisan political literature
 - ▶ Perform clerical or other duties for a partisan political committee during a campaign or on election day
 - ▶ Participate in any organized effort to provide voters with transportation to the polls (if the effort is organized by or associated with a partisan political party or candidate)
 - ▶ Attend, as an official representative of the Armed Forces, partisan political events, even without actively participating
 - ▶ Engage in the public or organized recruitment of others to become partisan candidates for nomination or election to a civil office
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Political Speech

- Relative to making political speeches, as a Coast Guard member: **You may:**
 - ▶ Sign a petition for specific legislative action, or a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot, but only under specific circumstances. You can sign a petition if the signing does not obligate you to engage in partisan political activity and is done as a private citizen and not as a representative of the Armed Forces
 - ▶ Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing your personal views concerning public issues if those views do not attempt to promote a partisan political cause
 - ▶ Display a political sticker on your private vehicle or wear a political button; however, you may NOT wear a button on your uniform or at any time while on duty
 - ▶ Write a personal letter, not for publication, expressing preference for a specific political candidate or cause, provided it is not part of an organized letter-writing campaign on behalf of a partisan political cause or candidate.

 - As a Coast Guard member, **you may NOT:**
 - ▶ Allow, or cause to be published, partisan political articles signed or authorized by you for soliciting votes for or against a partisan political party or candidate
 - ▶ Speak before a partisan political gathering of any kind for promoting a partisan political party or candidate
 - ▶ Participate in any radio, television, or other program or group discussion as an advocate of a partisan political party or candidate
 - ▶ March or ride in a partisan political parade
 - ▶ Use contemptuous words against the office holders described in Title 10, United States Code, Section 888
 - ▶ Display a large political sign, banner, or poster (as distinguished from a political sticker) on the top or side of your private vehicle
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***Serving as an
Election Official***

As a Coast Guard member, you may serve as an election official if such service:

- Does not interfere with military duties
 - Is performed while out of uniform
 - Is not as a representative of a partisan political party
 - Has the prior approval of Commanding Officer (CO) or equivalent authority. This approval authority may be delegated, but not below the level of installation CO
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Political Dissent

The basic mission of the Coast Guard is to safeguard the security of the United States. As a Coast Guard member, your right of expression, consistent with good order, discipline, and national security, must be preserved to the maximum extent possible.

However, COs, exercising calm and prudent judgment, need to ensure that any conduct that would destroy unit effectiveness does not go unchecked. Problems are to be resolved based on the specific facts of each situation, and in accordance with the provisions of applicable regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

***Possession or
Distribution of
Printed Materials***

You may not be prohibited from distributing or posting materials solely on the grounds that these materials are critical of government policies or officials.

However, you cannot distribute any written or printed materials at a Coast Guard installation when the CO or authorized designee determines the materials:

- To be a clear danger to the loyalty, discipline, or morale of members of the Armed Forces
- Interfere with accomplishing the military mission

These materials may be impounded and returned to you when you leave the installation, unless the impounded materials are determined to be evidence of a crime.

Writing for Publications

As a Coast Guard member, you may not write for unofficial publications during duty hours. Nor can you produce an unofficial publication, such as an underground newspaper, using government or nonappropriated fund property or supplies.

Any publication that contains language, the utterance of which is punishable by the UCMJ or other Federal laws, may subject the person(s) involved in its printing, publishing, or distribution to prosecution or other disciplinary action.

Off-Limits Action

Certain establishments may be placed off limits under the Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards and Off-installation Liaison and Operations, COMDTINST 1620.1 (series).

An establishment runs the risk of being placed off limits if its activities include counseling service members to:

- Refuse to perform their duties
 - Desert their military service
 - Involve themselves in acts that would result in significant adverse effects on health, welfare, or morale of military members.
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Groups, Organizations, and Unions

Because of its incompatibility with military service, active participation in the following types of organizations is prohibited:

- Organizations supporting supremacist causes or attempting to create illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, or national origin
- Organizations advocating the use of force or violence or otherwise engaging in efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights

NOTE: Active participation includes publicly demonstrating or rallying, fundraising, recruiting and training members, and organizing or leading.

***Demonstrations and
Similar Activities***

Demonstrations or other activities near any Coast Guard installation are prohibited if they could:

- Result in interfering with, or preventing the orderly accomplishment of, a mission of the installation
 - Present a clear danger to loyalty, discipline, or morale of the Armed Forces.
 - It is a crime for any person to enter a military installation for any purpose prohibited by law or lawful regulation, or for any person to enter or reenter an installation after having been barred by order of the installation CO.
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***Demonstrations and
Similar Activities
(continued)***

As a member of the Coast Guard, you are prohibited from participating in demonstrations when:

- On duty
 - In a foreign country
 - The demonstrators are in uniform
 - The activities constitute a breach of law and order
 - Violence is likely to result
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