



Revised 10-7-08

## Frequently Asked Political Participation Questions & Answers

Q. Can a Steward discuss an endorsed candidate in a Unit Meeting even if that meeting is inside a school?

A. Stewards at members-only meetings may discuss anything they wish, including the support of an endorsed candidate. However, they may not fundraise in a governmental building, unless the building or parts of it are rented for such purpose. Stewards wishing to hold fundraising activities outside of the workplace should contact UTD.

Q. Can campaign literature be placed in a person's mailbox?

A. No, School Board Rule 6Gx13-1C-1.06 #8 states that no employee shall use any School Board property, including district-provided email accounts, for political purposes, including influencing an election.

Q. Can I wear a Candidate button or t-shirt at school/work location?

A. While education employees do not "shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate," the cases make it plain that they may not embroil students in their personal political views. Thus, to avoid possible charges of code of ethics violation (they could be subjected to an ethics complaint for exploiting "a professional relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage" or for failing to take "reasonable precautions to distinguish between personal views and those of any educational institution or organization with which the individual is affiliated"), **we strongly recommend that political insignias NOT be displayed in the presence of students because doing so could put you in violation of SB 6Gx13- 4C-1.064 as it may be viewed as campaigning activity or indirectly using students to communicate political messages to parents and the community.**

Q. Can I wear a Candidate t-shirt at school/work location?

A. See answer to previous question.

Q. Can a Principal call a faculty meeting on the day of a Primary or General Election?

A. No, *Article XX, Section 3 H--Meetings on Election Days* Meetings after school hours requiring the attendance of school employees shall not be scheduled for any day when county-wide primary or general elections are held.

It is recommended that you discuss this with your Principal prior to the date in order to prevent a meeting being inadvertently scheduled. Should your principal schedule a meeting and refuse to reschedule, please contact your UTD Organizer immediately.

Q. How much time do I have to vote?

A. Article XIV, Section 6—Voting Leave

The Board agrees, upon approval of the principal or supervising administrator, to allow an employee, up to two hours with pay to vote in each local primary and general election provided, however, that the maintenance of classroom instruction shall be given priority consideration in the approval, scheduling, and duration of such voting leave.

The location of the employee's precinct and the employee's work schedule shall be considered in scheduling such time off. The employee may be required to show proof of registration, prior to being granted voting leave.

B. 2008-09 Calendar also includes the following language:

Voting Leave: Full time teachers released with pay two (2) hours earlier than the end of the teacher's workday. All other full time employees (non-teachers) will be granted leave according to their respective contracts. All employees may be required to show proof of registration prior to being granted voting leave.

Q. Can I display a campaign sign in a classroom?

A. No. Involving students in the personal support of or opposition to a political candidate would be a violation of the Code of Ethics of the education profession and could subject a certificate holder to a complaint before the Professional Practices Section of the Department of Education (they could be subjected to an ethics complaint for exploiting "a professional relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage" or for failing to take "reasonable precautions to distinguish between personal views and those of any educational institution or organization with which the individual is affiliated").

Q. If a person works a voting precinct, how far do they stand from the voting entrance?

A. No person, political committee, committee of continuous existence, or other group or organization may solicit voters inside the polling place or within 100 feet of the entrance to any polling place, or polling room where the polling place is also a polling room, or early voting site. Before the opening of the polling place or early voting site, the clerk or supervisor shall designate the no-solicitation zone and mark the boundaries. 102.031 (4) (a) (b) (c)

Q. Can I send my colleagues political information through my school email address to theirs?

A. No, refer to School Board Rule 6Gx13-1C-1.06.

**Q. Can I have candidates come to my classroom?**

A. While there is no statutory prohibition to a candidate for public office coming to a classroom to speak to students, they may not use the opportunity for political speech. Since the presence of a candidate may create disturbance (i.e., press coverage, entourage, etc.) their attendance must be arranged and approved in advance by the school administration.

School Board Rules

School Visits—6Gx13-1B-1.06

School Visits-Procedures—6Gx13-1B-1.061

UTD/MDCPS Contract

Article VIII, Section 2—School Visitations

**Q. Does Florida allow early voting?**

A. The Florida Legislature passed legislation which standardizes early voting throughout the state. Early voting is defined as "*casting a ballot prior to election day at a location designated by the supervisor of elections and depositing the voted ballot in the tabulation system.*" Please go to the UTD web page at [www.utd.org](http://www.utd.org) for early voting locations and schedules in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. Early voting for the 2008 general election begins October 20<sup>th</sup> and runs until November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

B. Florida also allows any voter to vote via absentee ballot. The deadline to request an absentee ballot for the 2008 general election is October 6, 2008. Please go to the UTD web page at [www.utd.org](http://www.utd.org) for absentee ballot information for Miami-Dade and Broward Counties.