

Political Activities

Guidance for Members of the Armed Forces

Q1. What is the DoD policy regarding political activities by members of the Armed Forces?

A1. DoD has a longstanding policy of encourage military personnel to carry out the obligations of citizenship. However, AD members will not engage in partisan political activities and all military personnel will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of a political candidate, campaign or cause.

Q2. Can political candidates visit a DoD installation or facility?

A2. A candidate for civil office may not be permitted to engage in campaign or election related activities (e.g., public assemblies, town hall meetings, speeches, fund-raisers, press conferences, post-election celebrations, and concession addresses) while on a DoD installation, which includes overseas installations and areas under the control of combat or peacekeeping forces of the United States military.

Q3. Can a seated politician visit a DoD installation or facility if they are campaigning for office?

A3. A candidate who holds a civil office may visit a DoD installation or facility for the purpose of conducting official business or to access entitlements or benefits the candidate is authorized to use; however, no candidate running for office is permitted access for campaign or election purposes.

Q4. How does DoD define when a political campaign begins and ends?

A4. According to DoD policy, a political campaign or election begins when a candidate, including an incumbent officeholder, makes a formal announcement to seek political office or when an individual files for candidacy with the Federal Election Commission or equivalent regulatory office. Once initiated, a political campaign or election does not end until one week after the conclusion of the relevant election.

Q5. What political activities can a service member participate in and which ones are prohibited?

A5. DoD has a longstanding policy of encouraging military personnel to carry out the obligations of citizenship, and certain political activities are permitted, such as voting and making a personal monetary donation. However, active duty members will not engage in partisan political activities, and all military personnel will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval or endorsement of a political candidate, campaign or cause.

Examples of political activities that are prohibited include campaigning for a candidate, soliciting contributions, marching in a partisan parade and wearing the uniform to a partisan event. For a complete list of permissible and prohibited activities, please consult

DoD Directive 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces [Guidance for Military Personnel](#).

Q6. Does that mean a service member can vote, but not actively support a particular candidate or cause?

A6. Unquestionably, service members can exercise their right to vote. However, AD members will not engage in partisan political activities and will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement. For a list of permissible and prohibited activities, please consult DoD Directive 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces (reference (c)).

Q7. Does DoD support and encourage its personnel to vote?

A7. DoD encourages all members of the Armed Forces and federal civilian employees to register and vote. The department actively supports the Federal Voting Assistance Program to ensure its personnel have the resources, time and ability to participate in their civic duty. Additionally, department leaders and military commanders appoint voting assistance officers at every level of command and ensure they are trained and equipped to provide voting assistance.

Q8. Can a DoD installation be used as a polling place in an election?

A8. As of December 31, 2000, if an installation facility is designated as an official polling place by an election official or has been used as a polling place since January 1, 1996, installation commanders will not deny the use of that facility as a polling place for any election. The Secretary of Defense or the secretary of the military department concerned may grant a waiver of the requirement to allow use of the facility if it is determined that security is a concern. All members of the Armed Forces on AD are instructed to remain clear of all polling places except when voting.

Q9. Does DoD provide any voting assistance?

A9. Yes, DoD provides voting assistance via the Federal Voting Assistance Program. FVAP works to ensure service members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so – from anywhere in the world – via FVAP.gov. The services also provide voting assistance officers at the unit level to facilitate in-person assistance when required.