

REVISED - Please Post & Share

A critical election is approaching on November 2. In light of a recent lawsuit brought against Cincinnati Public Schools by the anti-public school group COAST, now is a good time to remind teachers about what they can and cannot do under applicable School Board policies and CPS's December 2002 agreement with COAST.

What Teachers Can Do:

- Teachers can always volunteer to help the political campaigns of candidates or the parties of their choice, outside of school hours.
- Teachers can display bumper stickers and yard signs for the candidates of their choice on their cars or at home.
- Teachers can encourage students and parents to learn about the candidates and issues of the day, to vote, and to volunteer for the campaigns of candidates, issues or political parties of their choice.
- Teachers can encourage students 18 years or older to register and vote, and encourage them to make sure that their parents are registered and vote.
- Teachers can, as part of an educational process, organize field trips to take students to vote, so long as no particular candidate or party is given an advantage.
- Teachers can receive from CFT in their school mailboxes materials describing the candidates' positions on important issues, and advocating the election or defeat of candidates.

What Teachers Cannot Do:

Under the COAST Agreement, and applicable school policy, teachers should not be involved in the following activities:

- Displaying political signs favoring particular parties, candidates or issues in your classroom or on school grounds (a teacher can display political signs in a classroom if part of some type of historical or educational display so long as all competing candidates are given equal treatment. Example: signs for Senate candidates Lee Fisher and Rob Portman both displayed, rather than signs only for Mr. Fisher or only for Mr. Portman).
- Teachers should not organize presentations in their classroom or elsewhere on school property where only one side of a political contest (whether candidates or ballot issues) are invited to attend and make presentations. In other words, if you invite a candidate or a spokesperson for an issue campaign to speak at your school, the opposition should be invited to speak as well.
- Teachers should not organize field trips to the Board of Elections in coordination with one particular candidate or political party without given the opposing candidate or party an equal opportunity to participate and/or provide information about their party, candidates or issues. In other words, any voting field trips should not rely exclusively on the help of one candidate or political party.
- Teachers should not distribute a party or candidate's sample ballot or literature to students, without giving the opposing candidate or party the equivalent opportunity to present sample ballots or written materials.
- If trips to the Board of Elections are arranged, we encourage teachers not to rely on candidates or political parties to provide transportation or information. Rather, neutral groups such as churches, civic organizations or volunteer parents should be utilized.

- Teachers should consult and follow the CPS policy on field trips when taking students out of school for any election related activity.

Feel free to consult with CFT staff if you have any questions about these policies.