

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces

Q1. Who are included as “members of the Armed Forces?”

A1. As defined in [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Services*](#), not only does this include members on active duty, it also includes members of the Reserve Components not on active duty, members of the National Guard even when in a non-Federal status, and retired members.

Q2. What is the DoD policy regarding political activities by members of the Armed Forces?

A2. DoD has a longstanding policy of encouraging military personnel to carry out the obligations of citizenship. However, active duty members are specifically prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities and all members of the Armed Forces should always avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement.

Q3. What is a “partisan political activity?”

A3. As defined in [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Services*](#), a partisan political activity is an activity supporting or relating to candidates representing, or issues specifically identified with, national or State political parties and associated or ancillary organizations or clubs.

Q4. If the DOD encourages military personnel to carry out the obligations of citizenship how am I, as an active duty member, allowed to participate in politics?

A4. An active duty member may register to vote, vote, and express certain personal opinions on political candidates. You can also promote and encourage others to exercise their obligations of citizenship in their non-official capacities. [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Services*](#), describes several additional ways to participate as well, such as serving as an election official, signing a petition, writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper, making monetary contributions, displaying political bumper stickers, and attending (but not actively participating in) political fundraising activities. Please note, the brief examples above may have more specific requirements so be sure to review all available written guidance. Always speak with your chain of command to ensure you are participating properly.

Q5. As an active duty member of the Armed Forces is there anything I am not allowed to do regarding my political activities?

A5. [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Services*](#), specifically lists several “shall nots” for active duty members. Overall, any activity that may be reasonably viewed as directly or indirectly associating the DoD with a partisan political activity or is otherwise contrary to the Directive shall be avoided. Some specific prohibitions listed in the Directive include: active participation in political fundraising activities, rallies, conventions, debates, public group discussion, and political clubs; use of official authority or official influence; allow or cause to be published partisan political articles, letters or endorsements that solicit votes for or against a partisan political party, candidate or cause (this is distinguished from a letter to the editor); or, solicit others with respect to fundraising activities. Please keep in mind that activities not expressly prohibited in the Directive may still be contrary to the spirit and intent of the Directive.

Q6. As a member of the Armed Forces *not* on active duty what am I allowed to do?

A6. Members not on active duty may do all the same things active duty members may do and more. Many members not on active duty may actively participate in partisan politics. However, members

cannot wear the uniform and cannot otherwise act in a manner that could reasonably give rise to the inference or appearance of official sponsorship, approval, or endorsement. This includes limitations on nominations, candidacy and campaigning which are discussed in more detail in [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Services*](#).

Q7. Can I ever wear my uniform when I attend political events?

A7. No. [DoD Instruction 1334.01, *Wearing of the Uniform*](#), discusses prohibitions related to the wear of the uniform and includes anytime during, or in connection with furthering, political activities when the inference of official sponsorship for the activity or interest may be drawn. This prohibition applies to all members of the Armed Forces.

Q8. Does that mean a member of the Armed Forces can vote, but not actively support a particular candidate or cause?

A8. Unquestionably, members of the Armed Forces can exercise their right to vote. However, active duty members will not participate in partisan political activities and will avoid the inference that their political activities imply or appear to imply DoD sponsorship, approval, or endorsement. Participation includes more than mere attendance as a spectator. For a more detailed list of permissible and prohibited activities, please consult [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces*](#).

Q9. Are there any specific rules regarding local nonpartisan political activities?

A9. Yes, [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces*](#), does not preclude participation in local nonpartisan political campaigns, initiatives, or referendums. However, a member taking part still cannot wear a uniform or use any Government property or facility while participating, nor allow such participation to interfere with or prejudice the member's performance of military duties. As always, a member should not engage in conduct that in any way may reasonably imply that the DoD has taken an official position on, or is otherwise involved in, the local political campaign or issue.

Q10. Does DoD provide any voting assistance?

A10. Yes, the DoD provides voting assistance via the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP). 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 www.fvap.gov. The Armed Forces also provide voting assistance officers and installation voters assistance offices to facilitate in-person assistance.

Q11. Can I become a nominee or candidate or hold a political office as an active duty member of the Armed Forces?

A11. Generally, no. Please consult your chain of command and [DoD Directive 1344.10, *Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces*](#), for specifics regarding seeking or holding a political office.