

Political Candidates or Elected Officials on Campus

RVC Administrative Procedure (2:10.010)

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A. Purpose

As a publicly funded institution, Rock Valley College is absolutely prohibited from participating or intervening, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office at any level (federal, state, or local). Violation of this prohibition could lead to financial penalties or even jeopardize the college's ability to distribute financial aid.

Whether any particular activity constitutes impermissible participation or intervention in a political campaign depends on all of the facts and circumstances of the situation. However, hosting political candidates and elected officials on campus will always raise issues that must be addressed appropriately and consistently to ensure that improper participation or intervention by the college in politicking or electioneering is avoided.

The following procedures have been developed to manage appearances/visits at all RVC locations by all individuals seeking political office or who are elected officials at any level (federal, state, or local).

Scope

This applies to all employees and students who would like to invite a political candidate or elected official to campus for any reason.

B. Department and Primary Point of Contact Involved

Department: Communications & Marketing

Rock Valley College

Point of Contact: Executive Director of College Communications

C. Definitions

Elected Official: any individual who holds an elected position at any level.

Political Candidate: any individual who plans to or is running for elected office.

Surrogates: anyone representing an elected official or political candidate; sometimes referred to as a staffer.

D. Procedures

Elected Officials, Political Candidates, or Surrogates

To speak on campus, an elected official, political candidate, or any surrogate who intends to speak on their behalf must be a guest under the sponsorship of an officially recognized college organization or unit. The Executive Director of College Communications, in coordination with the Office of the President, must first approve all such invitations before they are extended to officials. This ensures that all visits comply with applicable college policies and procedures as well as the Code of Ethics for State Employees. Additionally, provisions must be in place for suitable hosting, including any necessary security measures.

Those wishing to extend an invitation to an elected official, political candidate, or their surrogate to campus must submit a Communications & Marketing Request form for approval at least 30 days before the proposed visit. Such requests should include information regarding the person to be invited, the date, purpose, and format of the proposed visit, the identities of all college units involved in the visit, and any other information relevant to the proposed invitation.

There may be no fundraising of any kind by political candidates, elected officials, political campaigns, political parties, or other political organizations in association with a college event, whether or not that event is hosted on campus. This rule applies during and outside of an election cycle. This prohibition also applies to fundraising by student organizations recognized by the college.

In accordance with IRS regulations that prohibit the endorsement or the appearance of an endorsement of a political candidate by a tax-exempt organization, traditional political rallies are not permitted. Rather, any events involving an elected official, political candidate, or surrogate should be educational in nature.

If their campus visit is approved, the elected official, political candidate, or surrogate will be introduced by a college representative (which may include student leaders of clubs and organizations). The introduction and all communication concerning the political guest's appearance must explicitly state that the college neither supports nor opposes the candidate.

Rock Valley College

No banners, placards, or other signage typically found at a political rally are allowed in or around the venue where the elected official, political candidate, or surrogate is being hosted.

If a candidate is invited to speak on campus, the college must provide equal opportunity to all candidates for that particular office to speak on campus in accordance with and consistent with the law and college policies. The same parameters and provisions must apply to all such candidates.

If event planners want to invite an elected official, political candidate, or their surrogate to an on-campus event, they should follow the procedure above.

US President and/or Presidential Candidates

Given the heightened visibility of the United States President and candidates for the presidency, as well as the increased security protocols, invitations to the President or candidates for the presidency may only be issued (or accepted) by the President of Rock Valley College.

Logistics and Communications

Plans for approved events involving political candidates or elected officials may be subject to review by the college's General Counsel. Additionally, the Communications and Marketing Department will monitor invitations to prevent duplication and scheduling conflicts.

All media outreach related to these events must be directed through College Communications, which will manage and coordinate press credentials and on-site coverage in cooperation with the Rock Valley College Police Department.

E. Related Documents

- Code of Ethics for State Employees
- Communications & Marketing Request

Reference: Board Report #6223

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