



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

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TO: Executive Branch employees

FROM: Michael DiBiase, Director 
Department of Administration

DATE: July 6, 2018

SUBJECT: **Political Activities**

I would like to remind all employees that there are laws prohibiting political activities during work hours, on state-owned equipment and in the work environment. The summary below provides additional information regarding state and federal restrictions on these types of activities.

Merit System Act Limitations

The Merit System Act limits the ability of State employees to participate in the political process. Section 36-4-52 of the Rhode Island General Laws clearly states that “[n]o classified employee shall during working hours engage **to any extent in any form of partisan politics** except that he or she may attend and vote at any party caucus, primary, or election held during working hours.” Classified employees may participate in partisan politics outside of working hours.

The solicitation of political contributions by or from classified employees is also prohibited at work. Per state law, State employees in charge of access to State buildings shall not permit any person to enter the building, office, or room, for the purpose of making, collecting, receiving or giving notice of any political assessment, subscription, or contribution.

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Finally, the Merit System Act also expressly prohibits any individual who is a candidate for nomination or for election for any elective office from seeking to influence the vote of any person by promising to use political influence to appoint or promote someone to or in the classified service.

Violations of these statutes is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 60 days in jail. In addition, a classified employee who is convicted of violating any of these provisions is subject to dismissal per state law. If criminal charges are not brought, classified employees who violate these statutes may still be at risk for demotion or dismissal.

Hatch Act

The Hatch Act not only prohibits State employees who are paid with federal funds from running for partisan elective office, but it also prohibits State employees from directly or indirectly coercing or advising other State employees to contribute cash or anything of value for political purposes. The Hatch Act prohibits federally funded State employees from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for office.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please consult with your Department's legal office.