



**Northwestern  
University**

**Responsible University Officials:** Executive Vice President; Provost; Vice President for Student Affairs; Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer  
**Responsible Office:** Office of the Provost; Office of Human Resources; Dean of Students Office  
**Origination Date:** Prior to 2012

## Use of University Facilities for Political Activities

### Policy Statement

This Policy addresses the use of Northwestern University’s facilities and property for political activities. Although University organizations may sponsor political forums or debates, only recognized student organizations may use University facilities to host an event on behalf of a single political candidate. It applies to activities on any of the University’s campuses and to activities relating to any political candidate, whether domestic or foreign.

### Reason for Policy/Purpose

Northwestern is committed to freedom of expression by its community, including the expression of individual political views. At the same time, as a tax-exempt organization, the University may not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office. Care must be taken to separate individual expression from any actual or perceived participation or intervention by the University in political campaigns. Northwestern does not and cannot endorse or oppose any political candidate.

Northwestern recognizes that students, faculty, and staff may wish to participate in the political process and that such participation may, in fact, contain an educational component. Northwestern adheres to the principle that “every member of the academic community has a right to participate or not, as [they] see [ ] fit, in the election process. On the other hand, no member of that community should speak or act in the name of the institution in a political campaign” (American Council on Education, 1970).

This Policy on the Use of University Facilities for Political Activities is intended to provide guidance on adhering to these fundamental principles.

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## Who Approved This Policy

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Executive Vice President; Provost; Vice President for Student Affairs; Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer

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## Who Needs to Know This Policy

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All members of the University community, including faculty, students, and staff.

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## Website Address for This Policy

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<http://policies.northwestern.edu/docs/use-of-university-facilities-for-political-activities-final-012717.pdf>

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## Contacts

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If you have any questions about this policy, you may contact:

1. For faculty issues: Associate Provost for Faculty, Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, at (847) 491-7040 or [assoc-prov-faculty@northwestern.edu](mailto:assoc-prov-faculty@northwestern.edu)
2. For student issues: Dean of Students at (847) 491-8430 or [dos@northwestern.edu](mailto:dos@northwestern.edu)
3. For staff issues: Associate Vice President, Human Resources, Dana Bradley, at (847) 467-5629 or [dana.bradley@northwestern.edu](mailto:dana.bradley@northwestern.edu)

If you are planning an event involving noted speakers or special guests, you may contact:

1. To arrange police presence or security for the event: Assistant Vice President and Deputy Chief of Police, Gloria S. Graham, at (847) 467-5376
2. If you plan to invite media other than Northwestern student media to cover the event, or you anticipate that media will want to attend: Storer (Bob) Rowley, Director of Media Relations, University Relations, at (847) 491-4889

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## Definitions

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Third party: Any individual or organization that is not directly affiliated with Northwestern University (i.e., not a Northwestern University faculty, student, staff member or recognized student organization).

University Liaison: An individual (faculty, staff, or student) or University school or department with authority to organize a third-party, campaign-related event using University facilities or property, or a recognized student organization.

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## **Policy/Procedures**

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### **POLITICAL POLICY**

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It is the policy of Northwestern University not to participate in, directly or indirectly, or to intervene in (including by means of the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. This Policy applies to activities on any of the University's campuses and to activities relating to any political candidate, whether domestic or foreign.

### **GUIDELINES FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY AT NORTHWESTERN**

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Recognized student organizations may reserve University facilities, including lecture halls, outdoor reservable space, and any other space available to all recognized student organizations, to conduct organizational meetings or to host, sponsor and/or publicize an event on behalf of a candidate. However, no University organization or individual (faculty, staff, or student) may:

1. Use the name or seal of the University or any of its schools or other units on letters or other written materials intended for support of a political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office, including the solicitation of funds for such purpose or activities. This includes a prohibition on use of University letterhead, envelopes, email accounts, telephone lines and voicemail systems for communication. This also includes prohibition of soliciting funds in the name of the University (or in the name of a University student organization) to be used in off-campus political intervention or participation. This does not include (i) use of the University name (and not its seal) solely as a description of the location for an event or (ii) use of a student organization's official name if it contains the University's name (so long as it is clear that any political views expressed by the student organization are not the University's views – see model disclaimer language below).
2. Use University facilities (for purposes of this policy, individual student rooms in University housing facilities are not considered to be "University facilities" or "University property") to raise funds through admissions, fees, contributions, donations, or sale of materials or services to benefit a political party, campaign, or candidate.
3. Use University funds (including student fees) to purchase campaign promotional material, pay for campaign ads or contribute in any way to a political campaign.

4. Use University funds (including student fees) to pay honoraria or cover transportation, A/V services, accommodation or meal expenses, or any other costs for candidates for public office or for speakers and presenters at an event on behalf of a candidate. Any additional security costs and/or any established facility rental rates incurred as a result of a campaign-related event shall be billed to the campaign.
5. Use University resources, including but not limited to, mail distribution services, the University seal or other identifying marks, stationery and letterhead, facsimile and duplicating machines, email or social media accounts, telephone lines, University computer or network resources, and voicemail systems for political campaigns or solicitation of endorsement of, or opposition to, candidates for public office.
6. Use University property for the placement of signs (including flyers, banners, posters, stickers, and chalking) of endorsement of, or opposition to, candidates for public office.
7. Host a campaign rally at University facilities that violates University policies, including but not limited to the University Disruption and Demonstration Policy.

#### **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATION EVENTS ON BEHALF OF A CANDIDATE**

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The following additional requirements apply for recognized student organizations that reserve University facilities to host, sponsor and/or publicize an event on behalf of a candidate:

1. In order to ensure compliance with all provisions of this Policy, student organizations must inform the Dean of Students ([dos@northwestern.edu](mailto:dos@northwestern.edu) or (847) 491-8430) and Norris Event Planning ([norris-events@northwestern.edu](mailto:norris-events@northwestern.edu) or (847) 491-2330) no later than three business days in advance of an event, or by Thursday for an event the following Monday. Any events that violate the minimum advance notice to the University can be ordered to immediately cease and desist.
2. At the beginning of the event the sponsoring student organization must deliver the following disclaimer: “This event is sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_. The use of Northwestern University facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by the University. The views of those invited to speak on campus are the views of the speaker and not of Northwestern University. Northwestern University does not endorse or oppose any candidate or organization in connection with this or any other political campaign or election.”
3. Any communications advertising the event must contain the following disclaimer language: “This event is sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_. The use of Northwestern University facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by the University. Northwestern University does not endorse or oppose any candidate or organization in connection with this or any other political campaign or election.” The use of University email accounts to send mass emails in support of or in opposition to a candidate is not permitted. The name of the sponsoring student organization must be clearly stated on all material advertising the event.

4. The sponsoring student organization is responsible for communicating these guidelines to the speakers at the event (including the political candidate if applicable) to ensure awareness of and compliance with this Policy.
5. Use of University facilities for candidate debates are subject to the “Guidelines for Use of Facilities for Political Forums or Debates” below.

### **GUIDELINES FOR USE OF FACILITIES FOR POLITICAL FORUMS OR DEBATES**

The Internal Revenue Code permits tax-exempt organizations to sponsor political forums, candidate speeches, and/or debates provided no candidate either directly or indirectly receives an endorsement, preference, or support from the University. Only recognized student organizations may use University facilities to host, sponsor and/or publicize an event on behalf of a single candidate, subject to the guidelines set forth above. Any other University organization (such as University Departments or Administrative Units) may only sponsor political forums or debates. Where recognized University organizations (including student organizations) sponsor political forums or debates, the following guidelines apply:

1. The agenda for the forum or debate should address a broad range of issues and be of significant interest to members of the University community.
2. A non-partisan individual should serve as moderator and ensure that all ground rules are followed.
3. The moderator must state, at the beginning and conclusion of the program, that the views expressed by the participants are their own and not those of the University, and that sponsorship of the forum is not intended as an endorsement of any particular candidate.
4. Participants should be allotted equal time in which to present their views and ideas. Selection criteria for participation must be non-partisan.
5. While all forums should be of a non-biased educational nature, when a primary election serves as the basis for the forum or debate, intra-party debates are permissible. However, where a general election serves as the basis for the forum or debate, sponsorship of an intra-party debate may give the appearance of party favoritism, thereby making such an activity inappropriate.
6. Regarding intra-party debates for a primary election, all candidates for nomination by the party being represented at the forum should be allowed to participate. In such debates, however, sponsors are not required to involve candidates not belonging to the represented party.
7. Where a general election is the underlying context for a forum or debate, a non-partisan candidate debate is permissible provided that at least two candidates participate, and the forum or debate does not promote or advance one candidate over another. Criteria for determining participation must, likewise, be non-partisan.
8. Political forums or debates need not include every group or party, or individual seeking election. For example, forums or debates limited to mainstream parties are permissible.

9. At the beginning of each political forum, candidate speech or debate, a representative of the sponsoring group or organization must deliver the following disclaimer: “This event is sponsored by \_\_\_\_\_. The use of Northwestern University facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement by the University. Northwestern University does not endorse or oppose any candidate or organization in connection with this or any other political campaign or election.”

### **Third Party Use of University Facilities or Property**

Use of University facilities or property for campaign-related activities by third parties is prohibited. Third parties must organize events through a recognized University Liaison in compliance with the provisions of this Policy. Any campaign-related activity by third parties that does not comply with this restriction shall be immediately instructed to cease and desist.

### **Consequences of Violations of this Policy**

If any faculty, staff, or student of Northwestern violates the terms of this Policy, such individual may be subject to disciplinary action.

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## **Forms/Instructions**

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## **Appendices**

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## **Related Information**

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[University Disruption and Demonstration Policy](#)

[Policy on Lobbying and Communications by Faculty and Staff with Federal, State, and Local Government Officials](#)

[University Police Special Event Security Request](#)

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## **History/Revision Dates**

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**Origination Date:** Prior to 2012

**Last Amended Date:** January 27, 2017

**Next Review Date:** January 27, 2020