

PTA Election Year Do's and Don'ts

501(c)(3) Status and Law- PTA's CANNOT support/endorse/oppose candidates

Because PTA is a 501c3 non-profit corporation, the IRS does not allow PTA to support candidates. It is legal for PTAs to inform voters of an election and list *ALL* the candidates who are running. PTAs may hold candidate forums, as long as *ALL* candidates are invited. If your PTA endorses a candidate you not only jeopardize your PTA's non-profit status but the non-profit status of every PTA in Colorado

While PTA members are free to do as they wish as individuals, PTA as a group cannot discuss in meetings candidates. If a member brings up a candidate or their views at a PTA meeting, politely end the conversation and explain the restrictions of your non-profit status. You can direct members to other organizations that may be better able to provide them with answers to their questions

PTA's CAN support or oppose ballot issues. If your PTA wishes to discuss or take a position to support or oppose a ballot initiative, pending state or federal legislation, decisions or proposals/resolutions brought forward by the Jeffco Board of Education, local units:

- 1) Must give your current PTA Membership fair notice (7-10 days) that a vote will take place
- 2) Take and record a majority vote of the membership (not just your executive board)

Advocating for an Initiative

Colorado PTA prefers that local units help ballot issue campaigns by providing volunteer assistance with such things as literature distribution, yard signs, phone calling, etc., rather than making monetary contributions. Voter registration drives are encouraged.

Campaign Donations

The IRS does not allow local units to contribute more than "an insubstantial amount" of their gross revenue to ballot issue campaigns or lobbying. This is generally viewed as being between 2% and 5% of gross revenue. (Please note that this refers to the total amount given to all ballot issues and lobbying throughout the year.) Because all local units are part of the Colorado PTA's 501c3, a transgression in this area by one PTA unit jeopardizes all units in the state! If a unit believes that it can reasonably make a financial contribution, it is vital that a vote be held at a unit meeting and the decision be recorded in the minutes.

Rent the Room

Advocating for PTA's position or passing out literature on ballot issues may be done at school events/on school property **only** if the room is rented (or you adhere to whatever the district policy is). However, no school resources may be used for printing, mailing, or distributing literature advocating PTA's position on ballot issues. Literature with PTA's position may be copied at a location off of school grounds and may be mailed or handed out off of school grounds or at rented tables at school events. When mailing literature advocating PTA's position, the mail may be sent only to PTA members.

Educate Voters

As a non-profit organization, PTA's primary role is to educate. But PTA strongly encourages voter participation, since one of the purposes of PTA is to "secure adequate laws for the protection of children and youth," and part of the mission of PTA is to "support and speak on behalf of children and youth in schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children."

PTA Member Campaign Do's and Don'ts

You Can:

During PTA or Accountability meetings, ask your principal informational questions about the impact to your school/articulation area and district overall. If you feel comfortable, share what you learn by using your personal email list to distribute information with your friends, neighbors and other community members.

For PTA Meetings, consider renting the room for your meetings so your unit can discuss the Mill/Bond. Talk with your school staff on how to do this.

School facilities may be used for campaign events if the proper District policy to rent a table or room is followed. Consider renting the room or making a facilities request to have a table to share Mill/Bond information on school/District property during Back to School/Curriculum Nights, Parent/Teacher Conference Days, and during school events.

Campaign signs and items, such as t-shirts, hats, buttons, car/lawn signs will be available soon. T-shirts, hats and other apparel can be worn on school property, even by kids.

School/District employees can wear and post campaign items **outside of school** but **MAY** have signs in their cars while parked on school/District property.

But Please Don't:

Solicit a school/District employee to do campaign-related activities on school/District property and/or during school hours. Jeffco employees cannot work to promote or defeat a candidate or issue during work time or using work-related resources. They CAN do so on their own time, using their own resources.

Use any school/District equipment, such as copiers, fax machines, phones, computers, etc. for any campaign-related activity

Send any campaign-related material advocating for the Mill/Bond, or an event for the campaign, home in a student's weekly packet. This includes school newsletters, flyers, Friday Folders, etc.

Send emails with any campaign information to any Jeffco Schools email addresses or send staff emails with a signature line referencing the Mill/Bond. Ask for private email addresses.

Ask your child's teacher or a school/District employee to wear/post campaign items at school.

Distribute yard signs or campaign literature on school/District property

Place ANYTHING in a mailbox. This is a federal offense.

Questions? Feel free to contact Jeffco PTA President, Angela Geier at geierangel@gmail.com or Legislative Chair Katie Winner at Advocacy@jeffcopta.org.

Revised 8/16