

E-PME  *Enlisted*
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Political Activities 3.C.01

Learning Objective(s): **EXPLAIN** your rights and responsibilities as they pertain to participating in political activities.

Why You Need to Know This

The Coast Guard encourages all members to fulfill their civic obligations by registering, voting and expressing personal opinions; however as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States your involvement in certain types of political activities is limited by various laws and regulations. The intent of these restrictions is not to hinder your rights as an individual citizen, but rather to keep the military as an institution free from partisan political entanglements. For this reason, as an active duty member of the military you need to be careful that your participation in the political process is not perceived by the public as an official endorsement for a particular cause or candidate.

This lesson provides the information you will need to know in regards to your participation and involvement in political activities.

Topics Covered

This section will cover the following topics:

- Voting
- Monetary Contributions and Fundraising
- Participation in Political Groups and Events
- Political Speech
- Serving as an Election Official
- Political Dissent
- Possession or Distribution of Printed Materials
- Writing for Publications
- Off-limits Action
- Groups Organizations and Unions
- Demonstrations and Similar Activities

At the end of this lesson you will be required to participate in a learning activity. You are encouraged to first review the learning activity and the sign off requirements located in the “**You and Your Supervisor**” section of this lesson. Reviewing this information before you begin the lesson will allow you to take proper notes and focus on key learning points.

Voting

As an American citizen you have the right and civic duty to vote and voice your opinions concerning political matters; however you need to be very careful your personal opinions and activities are not directly, or by implication, represented as those of the Coast Guard.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizen Voting Act allows you, your spouse, and dependents to register and vote absentee in Federal office elections. In addition, some states also allow you, your spouse and dependents to register and vote absentee in state and local elections. Your local Voting Assistance Officer can help you and your dependents understand your voting rights and how to register and vote absentee and provide accurate non-partisan voting information.

Additional information on the Federal Voting Assistance Program can be found on the following link: <http://www.fvap.gov/>

Monetary Contributions and Fundraising

Specific to monetary contributions and fundraising:

You may:

- Make monetary contributions to a political organization or political committee favoring a particular candidate or slate of candidates

You may NOT:

- Solicit or otherwise engage in fundraising activities in Federal offices or facilities, including military reservations, for a partisan political cause or candidate.
 - Make campaign contributions to a partisan political candidate or to another member of the Armed Forces or an officer or employee of the Federal Government for promoting a political objective or cause
 - Solicit or receive a campaign contribution from another member of the Armed Forces or from a civilian officer or employee of the U.S. for promoting a political objective or cause, sell tickets for, or otherwise actively promote political dinners and other such fundraising events
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**Participation in
Political Groups
and Events**

Specific to your participation in political groups and events as a Coast Guard member:

When not in uniform you may:

- Attend political meetings or rallies as a spectator
- Join a political club and attend its meetings

You may NOT:

- Participate in partisan political management, rallies, campaigns, or conventions or make public speeches in the course of such activity
 - Serve in any official capacity or be listed as a sponsor of a partisan political club
 - Conduct a political opinion survey under the sponsorship of a partisan political group or distribute partisan political literature
 - Perform clerical or other duties for a partisan political committee during a campaign, on election day or after an election during the process of closing out a campaign
 - Participate in any organized effort to provide voters with transportation to the polls (if the effort is organized by or associated with a partisan political party or candidate)
 - Attend, as an official representative of the Armed Forces, partisan political events, even without actively participating
 - Engage in the public or organized recruitment of others to become partisan candidates for nomination or election to a civil office
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Political Speech

Relative to making political speeches, as a Coast Guard member:

You may:

- Sign a petition for specific legislative action, or a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot, but only under specific circumstances. You can sign a petition if the signing does not obligate you to engage in partisan political activity and is done as a private citizen and not as a representative of the Armed Forces
- Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing your personal views concerning public issues if those views do not attempt to promote a partisan political cause
- Display a political sticker on your private vehicle or wear a political button; however, you may NOT wear a button on your uniform or at any time while on duty
- Write a personal letter, not for publication, expressing preference for a specific political candidate or cause, provided it is not part of an organized letter-writing campaign on behalf of a partisan political cause or candidate

As a Coast Guard member, you may NOT:

- Allow, or cause to be published, partisan political articles signed or authorized by you for soliciting votes for or against a partisan political party or candidate
 - Speak before a partisan political gathering of any kind for promoting a partisan political party or candidate
 - Participate in any radio, television, or other program or group discussion as an advocate of a partisan political party or candidate
 - March or ride in a partisan political parade
 - Use contemptuous words against the office holders described in Title 10, United States Code, Section 888
 - Display a large political sign, banner, or poster (as distinguished from a political sticker) on the top or side of your private vehicle
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Serving as an Election Official

As a Coast Guard member, you may serve as an election official if such service:

- Does not interfere with military duties
 - Is performed while out of uniform
 - Is not performed as a representative of a partisan political party
 - Has the prior approval of Commanding Officer (CO) or equivalent authority. This approval authority may be delegated, but not below the level of installation CO
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Political Dissent

The basic mission of the Coast Guard is to safeguard the security of the United States. As a Coast Guard member, your right of expression, consistent with good order, discipline, and national security, must be preserved to the maximum extent possible.

However, COs, exercising calm and prudent judgment, need to ensure that any conduct that would destroy unit effectiveness does not go unchecked. Problems are to be resolved based on the specific facts of each situation, and in accordance with the provisions of applicable regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

Possession or Distribution of Printed Materials

You may not be prohibited from distributing or posting materials solely on the grounds that these materials are critical of government policies or officials.

However, you cannot distribute any written or printed materials at a Coast Guard installation when the CO or authorized designee determines the materials:

- To be a clear danger to the loyalty, discipline, or morale of members of the Armed Forces
- Interfere with accomplishing the military mission

These materials may be impounded and returned to you when you leave the installation, unless the impounded materials are determined to be evidence of a crime.

Writing for Publications

As a Coast Guard member, you may not write for unofficial publications during duty hours. Nor can you produce an unofficial publication, such as an underground newspaper, using government or non-appropriated, funds, property, or supplies.

Any publication that contains language, the utterance of which is punishable by the UCMJ or other Federal laws, may subject the person(s) involved in its printing, publishing, or distribution to prosecution or other disciplinary action.

Off-limits Action

Certain establishments may be placed off limits under the Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards and Off-installation Liaison and Operations, COMDTINST 1620.1 (series).

An establishment runs the risk of being placed off limits if its activities include counseling service members to:

- Refuse to perform their duties
 - Desert their military service
 - Involve themselves in acts that would result in significant adverse effects on health, welfare, or morale of military members
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Groups, Organizations, and Unions

Because of its incompatibility with military service, active participation in the following types of organizations is prohibited:

- Organizations supporting supremacist causes or attempting to create illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, or national origin
- Organizations advocating the use of force or violence or otherwise engaging in efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights

NOTE: Active participation includes publicly demonstrating or rallying, fundraising, recruiting and training members, and organizing or leading.

Demonstrations and Similar Activities

Demonstrations or other activities near any Coast Guard installation are prohibited if they could:

- Result in interfering with, or preventing the orderly accomplishment of, a mission of the installation
- Present a clear danger to loyalty, discipline, or morale of the Armed Forces
- Allow a person to enter a military installation for any purpose prohibited by law or lawful regulation, or for any person to enter or reenter an installation after having been barred by order of the installation CO

As a member of the Coast Guard, you are prohibited from participating in demonstrations when:

- On duty
 - In a foreign country
 - The demonstrators are in uniform
 - The activities constitute a breach of law and order
 - Violence is likely to result
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Learning Activity



To successfully complete this requirement you will need to recall at least one fact from each of the **eleven topic areas** covered in this lesson. From these eleven facts you must develop eleven questions and answers. Using the bank template found at the end of this section, **create eleven flash cards**. These flash cards will be useful to you later as you prepare for the E-PME Advancement Qualification Exam (AQE).

Sample Flash Card

<p>Example Question: <i>As a member of the Coast Guard, when are you prohibited from participating in demonstrations?</i></p>
<p>Answer: <i>When on duty.</i></p>

For You and Your Supervisor

In order to meet the sign-off requirement for this lesson **YOU** must:

1. Draft an email message containing your eleven questions and answers
2. On the “To” line enter the name of your supervisor (second class petty officer or above)
3. On the “Cc” line enter the following address:
D11-PF-TCP-EPME@uscg.mil
4. On the “Subject” line enter the words “BODY MARKING FLASH CARDS”
5. Before sending, review for spelling errors, proper greeting, and proper closing
6. Send email

Before signing off on this requirement your **SUPERVISOR** must:

1. Review questions and answers to ensure the information is correct and can be found in the lesson.
2. Review for spelling errors, proper greeting, and proper closing
3. Provide the member with corrective feedback and answer any questions they may have related to this topic
4. Sign-off the check-off sheet on the Record of Enlisted Professional Military Education (E-PME) Performance Requirements

Note: The E-PME Program Manager will review the questions and answers for use as Official E-PME flash cards.

References

The following references were used in this lesson, they can be found at [CG Directives at CG-612](#):

- Coast Guard Voting Assistance Program, COMDTINST 1742.3 (series)
 - Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces, DOD Directive 1344.10 (series)
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Other Resources

Additional information on this topic can be found in the reference listed below:

- Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Boards and Off-Installation Liaison and Operations, COMDTINST 1620.1 (series)
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Blank Flash Card

Question:

Answer:

Blank Flash Card

Question:

Answer: