



Direct Promotion of Bond Elections

04.29.2014

Question:

What can the district and its employees do to promote bond elections, and what are they prohibited from doing?

Answer:

According to Guideline 1/20/1997 issued by the Idaho Attorney General:

Public funds (which is defined as any money belonging to the government or any department of the government) should not be expended to support or oppose candidates or election issues...If public resources or public funds are used in any way related to a ballot issue, there must be equal access to the funds or resources on the part of both opponents and proponents of a ballot measure.

A school board may use district resources to advertise an election in a neutral fashion, for instance by:

- Sponsoring debates;
- Advertising a bond election provided pro and con views are equally represented; and
- Publicizing election information like polling place locations and hours, what the vote is on, and cost to property owners.

They may also express their support or opposition to a bond election by:

- Passing resolutions;
- Issuing statements of position;
- Giving speeches; and
- Participating in debates.

Using public funds in support or opposition to a ballot measure is **not** permitted.

Certificated Personnel:

Additionally, Principle X of the Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators restricts the political activities of certified educators by prohibiting them from "Using institutional privileges for the promotion of political candidates or for political activities, except for local, state, or national education association elections."

A few years ago, Superintendent Luna issued a memo with the following guidance for interpreting this restriction.

Examples of prohibited actions include, but are not limited to:

- Using the school district email system to coordinate political activities;
- Creating and printing political materials;
- Engaging in political proselytizing to a classroom of students;
- Urging 18-year-old students to vote a particular way in an election;
- Using students as couriers for political material; and
- Allowing the use of the school to further political agendas in conjunction with any school activity or event, including after-school events.



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