

CORONA-NORCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

1315

PUBLIC ACTIVITIES INVOLVING STAFF, STUDENTS, OR SCHOOL FACILITIES

POLITICAL PROCESSES

The Governing Board strongly supports the concepts of representative government and elected office, and recognizes the role of these concepts in public education. The Governing Board has a responsibility to actively advocate fiscal and public policy that supports the district's schools and the children in the community. The Board shall be proactive in defining the district's advocacy agenda based on the district's vision and goals and the needs of the district and community. The Board's advocacy efforts shall be conducted in accordance with legal requirements.

(cf. 4119.25/4219.25/4319.25 - Political Activities of Employees)
(cf. 9000 - Role of the Board)
(cf. 9140.1 - Meeting Conduct)

Ballot Measures/Candidates

No district funds, services, supplies, or equipment shall be used to urge the support or defeat of any ballot measure or candidate, including any candidate for election to the Board. (Education Code 7054)

The Board may discuss and study the potential effect of proposed or qualified ballot measures on the district's schools at an open and agendized Board meeting. The Board's discussion of the effect of such measures shall include an opportunity for staff and members of the public to speak on all sides of the issue. At that meeting, the Board may adopt a position or resolution in support of or in opposition to a ballot measure. The language in any resolution adopted by the Board shall not urge the public to take any action regarding the measure.

The Board's position on a ballot measure, including any resolution, shall be publicized only through normal district procedures and consistent with regular district practice for reporting Board actions. Such publicity shall be for informational purposes and shall not attempt to influence voters.

The Superintendent or designee may use district resources to provide students, parents/guardians, and community members with fair and impartial information related to ballot measures, including information about the impact of ballot measures on the district. (Education Code 7054)

In preparing or distributing such informational material, the Superintendent or designee shall analyze the material to help ensure that it is an appropriate informational activity, provides a fair analysis of the issues, and does not advocate passage or defeat of a measure or candidate.

District resources, including email or computer systems, shall not be used to disseminate campaign literature. In addition, district resources shall not be used to purchase advertisements, bumper stickers, posters, or similar promotional items that advocate an election result or urge voters to take any action in support of or in opposition to a measure.

Political activity related to district bond measures shall, in addition to the above, be subject to the following conditions:

1. The Superintendent or designee may research, draft, and prepare a district bond measure or other initiative for the ballot, but shall not use district resources to influence voters or otherwise campaign for the measure.
2. Upon request, Board members and district administrators may appear at any time before a citizens' group to explain why the Board called for an election on a bond measure and to answer questions. (Education Code 7054.1)

If the presentation occurs during working hours, the employee representing the district shall not urge a citizens' group to vote for or against the bond measure.

3. The Board or any individual Board member may file a written argument for the ballot that is either for or against any school measure. (Elections Code 9501)

Political Candidates

Debate or Forum: If a class or school-sponsored group plans a political debate or forum during the school day, the principal/teacher/sponsor shall ensure all candidates for the same public office or who have differing opinions on a political issue are given equal opportunity to participate.

Appearances: Political candidates may not appear at a school unless they are invited to visit or speak to a class or other school-related activity during school hours. Political candidates are entitled to the same rights of all citizens to visit the schools. Requirements noted above for debates or forums apply to school visits or appearances by political candidates, including equivalent opportunity for other candidates for the public office to visit at the same time.

Nothing in this policy prohibits an incumbent elected public official from appearances on district property upon the invitation of a Board member, the Superintendent or designee, or the principal, provided the visit is within the incumbent's official capacity and not a campaign activity.

Political Materials as Part of the Instructional Program

Teachers may use political materials as part of the instructional program, provided the material is germane to the instructional objectives of the course. Any presentation of political materials or issues, or expression of views, must be balanced and fair.

Teachers are responsible for providing students with the opportunity to investigate various sides of topics presented in their course, particularly in relation to controversial subjects, to the extent relevant to the course and appropriate to the maturity level and academic ability of the students.

Teachers shall permit freedom of expression on those topics that are matters of opinion so students may weigh alternative views and make up their own minds. Students should be encouraged to examine, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize the information available to them before drawing conclusions, as part of developing their capacities for rational judgment.

Teachers shall strive to promote tolerance for the opinions of others and respect for the rights of individuals to hold and express differing opinions.

Legislation

The Board's responsibility as an advocate for the district may include lobbying and outreach at the state, national, and local levels. The Board and Superintendent or designee shall work to establish and maintain ongoing relationships with elected officials, community leaders, and the media in order to communicate district positions and concerns.

The Board and Superintendent shall develop an advocacy action plan to define expectations and responsibilities. This plan may include, but is not limited to, legislative priorities, strategies for outreach to the media and community, development of key messages and talking points, and adoption of positions on specific legislation, regulations, or budget proposals.

To strengthen legislative advocacy efforts, the district may work with organizations and coalitions and may join associations whose representatives lobby on behalf of their members in accordance with Government Code 53060.5.

The district may provide fair and impartial information about legislative issues affecting schools and children and shall inform the community about its advocacy activities. However, informational materials about legislation shall not urge the public to lobby the legislature, Governor, or state agencies on behalf of the district.

As appropriate, the Board may direct the Superintendent or designee to draft legislative or regulatory proposals which serve the district's interests.

Legal Advocacy

The Board recognizes that some issues are more appropriately addressed judicially rather than legislatively. When a legal issue is likely to set a state or national precedent, the district may join with other districts or parties to resolve the issue through litigation or other appropriate means.

Political Forums

Forums on political issues may be held in district facilities as long as the forum is made available to all sides of the issue on an equitable basis. (Education Code 7058)

Legal Reference: Education Codes: 7050-7058 Political activities of school officers and employees, including: 7054 Use of district property, 7054.1 Requested appearance, 7056 Soliciting or receiving political funds 35160 Authority of governing boards, 35172 Promotional activities
Elections Code: 9501 School district elections, arguments for or against a measure
Government Code: 8314 Unlawful use of state resources, 53060.5 Attendance at legislative body; expenses, 81000-91015 Political Reform Act, including: 82031 Definition of independent expenditure
Code of Regulations, TITLE 2, 18600-18640 Lobbyists
18901.1 Campaign related mailings sent at public expense

Management Resources: CSBA Publications

Legal Guidelines: Use of Public Resources for Ballot Measures and Candidates, Fact Sheet, February 2011

Legal Guidelines for Lobbying Activity, Fact Sheet, February 2011

Institute for Local Government Publication:

Legal Issues Associated with Use of Public Resources and Ballot Measure Activities, June 2010

WEB Sites: CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

Fair Political Practices Commission: <http://www.fppc.ca.gov>

Institute for Local Government: <http://www.ca-ilg.org>

Adopted: January 22, 2019