



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Political Activity

Eff. Date 01/31/2023

**Purpose**

Police officers share the individual right to engage in political and other protected first amendment activity. However, police should not use their authority or the indicia of office, such as the uniform or title, for this purpose because of its inherently coercive nature; nor should they engage in collective political activity that compromises their ability to objectively view conflicts with which they may be called upon to deal.

**Procedure**

Madison General Ordinances specifically regulates political activity by all City of Madison employees. All police officers are bound by the City's Ethics Code provisions related to Political Activity Section 3.35(8) (Rev. 06/15/07):

- (8) *Political Activity*
- (a) *No employee while on duty or on official City business shall, for the apparent purpose of influencing the outcome of any referendum, or improving the chance of election of a person seeking elective office:*
- 1. Wear or display any campaign material.*
  - 2. Distribute any campaign literature.*
  - 3. Solicit, receive or give subscriptions, contributions or service for any candidate or referendum position.*
  - 4. Actively campaign for any candidate or any referendum position.*
- (b) *No employee while on duty or other official City business or off duty shall in any way coerce or attempt to coerce subscriptions, contributions or service from subordinate employees in support of a political party or a candidate for elective office or for or against a referendum position, or retaliate against or reward an employee for refraining from participating in any political activity. No employee on or off duty shall use her or his title or position or indicia thereof in any elective political activity.*
- (c) *This subsection does not apply to a response by a legal custodian or subordinate of the custodian to a request to locate, reproduce or inspect a record under Wis. Stat. § 19.35, if the request is processed in the same manner as the custodian or subordinate response to other requests to locate, reproduce or inspect a record under such section or to an employee providing other information within the knowledge of the employee by virtue of her or his City position if such information is made equally available upon request to any other person.*
- (d) *Police officers and firefighters shall observe the applicable rules of the Police and Fire Departments relating to political activity.*
- (e) *No elected official or candidate for a City elected office shall promise an appointment to any municipal position as an apparent reward for any political activity.*
- (f) *Pursuant to 5 USC sec. 1502, employees whose positions are federally funded in whole or in part may not be candidates in partisan elections without first being granted an unpaid leave of absence.*

Mayoral Administrative Procedural Memorandum 2-33, Rules of Conduct, also prohibits all police officers from “engaging in political activity in the workplace, or other conduct” as prohibited by Madison General Ordinance 3.35”.

Original SOP: 03/04/2015  
(Reviewed Only: 02/11/2016, 01/09/2017, 12/26/2017, 01/31/2020)  
(Revised: 01/31/2023)