



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

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MEMORANDUM

FROM: Robert B. Donin, General Counsel

RE: Federal Limitations on Political Campaign-Related
Activities at Dartmouth

Members of the Dartmouth community should be mindful of the federal laws and regulations that prohibit involvement in political campaigns by tax-exempt organizations.

Federal law provides that tax-exempt organizations such as Dartmouth may not “participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.” To assure compliance with this provision, Dartmouth in its organizational capacity may not intervene or participate in any campaign by endorsing or opposing a candidate or taking a position on an issue involved in a campaign for the purpose of assisting or opposing a candidate.

In addition, Dartmouth faculty, staff and students should take care, when expressing individual views, to avoid doing so in ways that imply official College support. Thus, letters supporting candidates for office should not be written on College stationery, and College resources (e.g., mailing lists, photocopiers) should not be used to support candidates for office.

College meeting rooms may be rented by outside political organizations, but such organizations are required to pay the fair market rental charge for such facilities. Advertising and publicity material for such an event should state prominently that the event is not sponsored by Dartmouth College.

Notwithstanding the general prohibition on institutional involvement in campaigns, certain educational activities relating to campaigns are permissible. For example, curricular activities aimed at educating students with respect to the political process and partisan editorials by student newspapers are permissible. Similarly, the presentation of campus or public forums is a recognized method of educating voters. College departments, programs and recognized organizations may sponsor appearances by political candidates if they follow College rules designed to ensure that such appearances are consistent with limitations on political activity by tax-exempt organizations. These rules are set forth in the *Student Handbook* section on “Sponsored Visits of/by Political Candidates.”

Every member of the community has the right to participate or not, as she or he sees fit, in the political process. Cooperation with the above guidance will help to insure that such individual political activity is not mistaken for endorsement or support by the College.

Our office would be glad to respond to questions about this subject and may be reached at 603.646.2444 or Office.of.General.Counsel@dartmouth.edu.