

AFSCME DC47 SUPPORTS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR OUR MEMBERS



Why the Union supports expanding political rights for City of Philadelphia employees.

1. There have been several court decisions throughout the United States that have declared restrictions similar to Philadelphia's to be unconstitutional as they do not allow employees their full first amendment rights.¹
2. Philadelphia's independent Task Force on Ethics and Campaign Finance reform has recommended that our City Employee's political rights should be equal with Federal Employee's rights.²
3. Members who are active in our community have often complained because they would like to be more active politically, but the restrictive rules of Philadelphia's "Little Hatch Act" puts their jobs in peril.
4. Having the right to openly campaign for political candidates will help us elect representative who will support DC47's issues.³

Why members want full citizen's rights for partisan activities.

1. Freedom of expression should be afforded to all citizens regardless of Civil Service status. Some of our members believe that local political action is a civic responsibility.
2. Most major Cities and the Federal government allow employees to be active in partisan politics on their own time.⁴
3. Members believe that the City should not be able to dictate what they do on their own time with their own money. They feel that their first amendment rights are being violated.
4. Some of our members are already active after work hours. They work for the Parking Authority and the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Because those authorities are under the Federal Hatch Act, they are permitted freedom to participate in partisan politics.

¹ See page 39 of the task force report and footnotes on same page citing court decisions that maintain the unconstitutionality of certain limitations on partisan political participation.

² See page 35 of the task force's report. and Phila. Charter §10-07(4)

³ Presently, we are not permitted to go door to door to talk to our neighbors about the candidates we support. This weakens our leverage with candidates.

⁴ In 1993, the language of the Hatch Act was amended to allow most federal employees to actively engage in partisan political management and partisan political campaigns.

More political rights will not lead to corruption.

1. When the rules for Philadelphia were written into the Charter and Philadelphia developed its “Model Civil Service System”, the City was reforming a totally corrupt patronage system. Many jobs were offered based on political affiliation and likewise people lost their jobs when administrations changed. Since the reform, no Civil Service Employee is asked about his/her politics prior to hiring and no Civil Service position is obtained from referrals from party leaders. That would not change by allowing more partisan participation after hours.
2. Civil Service employees are the only employees who cannot be hired or fired because of who they know or what party they belong to. This is not true of high level deputies and contract employees who work side by side with our members. None of those employees are restricted as we are restricted. This is basically unfair.
3. Historically, corrupt government linked to political favors has been at the higher levels of government, not the level of Civil Service that includes our members.
4. Our members are professional employees who take pride in their work. We have faith in our members and in the Civil Service System that enjoying Civil Rights will not result in corruption. Most of our members are not in a position of power that would lead to corruption that is linked with partisan politics.

**See Federal Employee
vs.
Philadelphia Civil Service Employee
current political activity rights
comparison chart on Page. 3**

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES	FEDERAL EMPLOYEES	PHILADELPHIA CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES*
May wear partisan specific campaign buttons on their own time	YES	NO
May put political bumper stickers and or pennants and signs on their personal property	YES	NO
May put campaign signs for partisan candidates and for parties on their lawns.	YES	NO
May campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections.	YES	NO
May distribute campaign literature in partisan elections.	YES	NO
May be an active participant in political rallies and meetings.	YES	NO
May express opinions about candidates and issues.	YES	NO
May hold office in political clubs or parties including serving as a delegate to a convention.	YES	NO
May make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections.	YES	NO
May be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections.	YES	NO
May campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, and municipal ordinances.	YES	YES
May initiate or circulate petitions provided that such petitions are not identified with a political party, or body, or partisan political club and do not call for the nomination or election of particular candidates to public or party office.	YES	YES
May attend political fundraising functions.	YES	YES
May attend political rallies and meetings.	YES	YES
May sign nominating petitions.	YES	YES
May contribute money to political organizations.	YES	YES
May attend political fundraising functions.	YES	YES

*See Civil Service Regulation 29.03¹

¹ For more clarification on the Federal Hatch Act see: Dec 2005 government publication “Political Activity and the Federal Employee”

