



Native Vote and the Non Profit: What You Can (and Can't) Do

When entering politics in an election year it is crucial to know what you are allowed to do and what you are not allowed to do; this is especially true for a non profit 501(c)3 organization. Here is a list to assist in running a successful election initiative.

A nonprofit CANNOT:

- Conduct any partisan activity, either in support or opposition of a candidate.
- Endorse a candidate
- Make campaign contributions
- Rate candidates on how they stand on issues important to the cause of the non profit
- Let candidates use the non profit's facilities or resources

A nonprofit CAN:

- Conduct nonpartisan activities that educate the public on the voting process
- Conduct voter registration drives (subject to restriction of funding sources)
- Conduct Get-Out-The-Vote drives
- Conduct candidate forums that provide equal opportunities for candidates to discuss issues
- Remind and encourage the public to vote
- Become Poll Workers
- Volunteer at the polls
- Distribute non partisan campaign materials, voter guides, and candidate questionnaires
- Educate candidates on issues important to the non profit
- Support or oppose ballot measures as a lobbying activity

A nonprofit Staff Member CAN:

- Engage in partisan activities outside of normal work hours or while using personal/vacation time.
- Identify as a staff member but should take care to stress that their support is as an individual not as a representative of the organization.
- Provide the campaign workers or candidates with personal contact information and appropriate times to contact

For more information about the role of non profits in elections go to www.nonprofitvote.org.

This document is intended to provide guidance on federal lobbying laws but is not legal advice and we would advise you to consult an attorney if you have specific concerns.