

How to Manage Political Expression at Work

It's election season in the U.S., in an era of increased polarization and divisiveness. What should employers do when their employees engage in political discussions at work or take part in political activism in their personal lives? Experts advised employers not to shut down discussions, but said they should set expectations for what is appropriate.

What Can Employers Do?

Experts advised employers to first examine the extent of political discussion or expression in their workplaces and find out how big of an issue it is.

Next, "reaffirm your workplace culture, foster inclusivity and respect for one another," they said. "Remind people that healthy political discussions are OK. HR can guide employees and managers on how these conversations should go."

Experts provided basic tips for positive interactions:

- Use "I" statements, so as not to speak for the other person.
- Conduct two-way conversations.
- Don't stereotype others.

But what should employers do if they find an employee has engaged in some possibly inappropriate political expression?

"Find out when did the behavior or expression occur, where did it occur, who engaged in the speech or conduct, and what was said or done?" "The 'what' is most important. Is it political speech? Or is it hate speech and crosses over into your anti-discrimination policy? If it's the latter, employers can take a more aggressive stance against the expression."

Source: SHRM



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