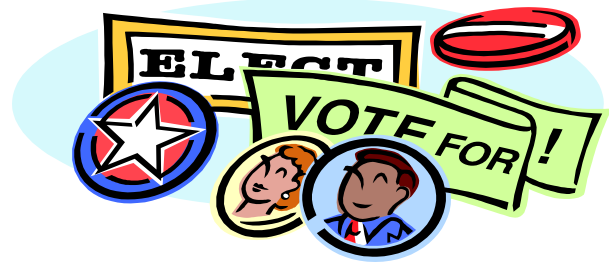


PTA and elections



PTA is nonpartisan and never endorses or opposes any candidate for public office

As tax exempt organizations, PTAs may not support or oppose any political party or candidate, including those running for school boards and nonpartisan slates.

Participation or intervention in political campaigns will endanger the organization's nonprofit status with the IRS. (For more information, *see Toolkit – Section 1, Basic Policies for All PTAs 1.3.4. and Section 4, Election Campaigns and the Role of the PTA 4.3.1*)

PTA does take positions on issues that affect children and youth.

One of the purposes of PTA is to secure adequate laws for children and youth. This means law making at all levels, including ballot measures. It is PTA's responsibility to disseminate as much factual, objective information as possible during election campaigns to help the community make informed choices.

A position adopted by the California State PTA on a statewide measure is the official PTA position for all PTA Districts, Councils and Units.

Therefore, any local unit, council or district PTA may participate in the campaign in support of the PTA position without a vote or other formal action by their local board or membership.

If the State PTA has taken a position on a ballot measure:

- local PTA units are strongly encouraged, but not required, to work actively for the PTA position. However, a PTA unit, council, or district **may not** take action in opposition to the position. (PTA members who feel the need to act in opposition to the PTA position must do so as individuals not as PTA, and may not refer to their role in PTA. (*For more details, see Toolkit Section 4, Advocacy 4.2.5g, Policy 7*).
- PTAs may participate in the campaign in a number of ways, but must comply with the non-partisan policy requirements that bind all PTAs, and with any state and federal laws and reporting requirements that apply.

Some things PTAs can do in election campaigns:

- Publicize campaign issues through use of e-mail, telephone trees, and mailings to members; hold meetings, provide speakers to present the PTA position, distribute campaign materials in public places or door-to-door, write letters to the editor of your local newspaper.
- The PTA may provide volunteers to work phone banks or in other activities at the campaign headquarters, and in activities such as, 'Get Out The Vote'. Encouraging community members to register and then to vote are important contributions for improving conditions for our children and the future of California.

Participate in a Candidates' Forum:

Since elected officials' decisions significantly affect the well being of children and youth, it is a PTA responsibility to disseminate factual, object information. Candidate forums provide one way to provide such information. While PTAs do not take positions on candidates for public office, they may engage in informational activities such as Candidates Forums. Often this is done jointly with other organizations such as League of Women Voters. Remember: no campaign literature is to be distributed inside the forum room. No buttons or other campaign promotions are to be worn. (*See Toolkit – Section 4, Advocacy 4.3.2.*)

Some cautions to observe in distributing campaign information:

- Unless your PTA has the permission of your local school board, you are not permitted to send campaign literature home with students. (*See Toolkit Section 4, Advocacy 4.2.5k, Policy 11*)

• Cautions in Use of PTA funds:

- PTA funds may be used to prepare, print, or mail campaign issue literature, but this expenditure must be authorized by a vote and recorded in the minutes. A complete and accurate record must be kept of all PTA campaign expenditures. (State law prohibits use of public resources, even if the School District permits it.)
- PTA does not directly finance election campaigns or divert PTA funds to any other organization, including campaign organizations. (However, PTA members may, as individuals, donate to a campaign if they choose to do so. A PTA may invite its members to contribute to a campaign, as long it does not appear coercive or expected.

PROTECT OUR PTA NON-PARTISAN POLICY AND TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

To retain our tax-exempt status and continue to receive tax-deductible contributions, PTAs may not: 1) devote more than an insubstantial part of their activities to influence legislation, including ballot measures (generally interpreted as not exceeding five percent of total income); 2) participate in any political campaign on behalf of or in oppositions to a candidate for national, state or local public office. A unit's failure to comply with these restrictions may endanger PTA district, council, California State and National PTA IRC 501© (3) status.

PTA never endorses a candidate, but does take positions on issues that affect children and youth.