

**Guidance from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)  
On Legislative Lobbying and Partisan Politics**

From:

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The CNCS General Counsel has added the following language for Learn and Serve America grantees. As always, please read this guidance carefully:

**In the context of educational institutions, we believe that participation by service-learning participants in non-partisan voter registration may be appropriately characterized as an educational rather than political activity, particularly if it is part of an educational project focused on civics or government in a democracy. For this reason, we have advised our Learn & Serve America grantees that such participation is a permissible service-learning activity. In this area we permit greater flexibility for service-learning programs sponsored by schools than for other types of national and community service programs.**

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The following guidance from the CNCS Office of the General Counsel is posted to the website noted below. A Spanish language version is also available.

[http://www.learnandserve.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/gc\\_guidance.asp](http://www.learnandserve.gov/for_organizations/funding/gc_guidance.asp)

This memorandum is for those overseeing, operating, and serving in, national and community service programs supported by the Corporation. It covers the rules concerning legislative lobbying and partisan politics.

You should keep in mind the following rule: Grantee staff and program participants may not (1) attempt to influence legislation or (2) participate in, or endorse, political events or activities, if they are doing so while charging time to a Corporation-supported program, accumulating service or training hours towards an education award, or otherwise performing activities supported by the Corporation.

Individuals may exercise their First Amendment rights, including participating in the political process, on their own initiative, on their own time, and using non-Corporation funds and resources. But in doing so, it is very important to avoid even a perception that national and community service staff or participants are engaging in political activities in those capacities. For example, if your organization engages in lobbying activities you must be careful to document that such activities are outside the scope of your Corporation-funded program.

Separate accounting for costs is crucial on this particular point. As another example, wearing AmeriCorps gear while participating in a political event may result in an allegation that the AmeriCorps program is supporting political activities, even if that is not the case. If your organization signs a public petition advocating some legislative action, you should be sure it identifies itself by its organizational name rather than as an AmeriCorps program. It is paramount that AmeriCorps and all of our national and community service programs proceed with utmost care to avoid perceptions that Federal resources are being mis-directed to political activities.

If you need additional guidance, please contact your program officer at the Corporation.