

PTA is Nonpartisan

Political Campaign Activity and the PTA —Restrictions and Guidelines

PTAs are absolutely prohibited from participating or intervening in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for political office.

Any violation of the political campaign proscription may result in revocation of tax-exempt status and loss of deductible contributions. Moreover, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will investigate complaints from the public that an educational organization is engaged in impermissible political campaign activity. Consequently, PTAs, their officers, members, and employees must scrupulously avoid any appearance of political campaign activity on the part of the PTAs.

The following is a brief statement of the PTA's philosophy:

The PTA represents parents, educators, community leaders, and anyone concerned with the welfare of children and youth; PTA has been advocating for their health, safety, education, protection, and general welfare for over 100 years. PTA representatives should conform to the requirements of the law, both in service to the PTA and in political activity. They should observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity, independence, and tax exemption of the PTA may be preserved.

PTAs may adopt a position expressing its support for or opposition to issues dealing with the health, safety, education, or general well-being of children and youth.

If one of the candidates holds a position and the other does not, however, the PTA may support the issue but not the candidate. An issue is an idea, a proposal, a plan of action.

While PTAs may not endorse a candidate, individuals, of course, remain free to do so on an individual basis without using their PTA titles. Every PTA officer must be aware that active campaigning in a personal capacity for or against a candidate for public office might be construed as a PTA endorsement.

PTA leaders, when running for office, may indicate PTA activities on their lists of accomplishments but may not imply PTA endorsement in any advertising. Similarly, PTA leaders supporting candidates may not use their PTA titles or affiliation in any ads or fliers distributed on behalf of a candidate.

Teacher Negotiations, Demonstrations, Strikes

The PTA is often approached during teacher negotiations. PTAs must refrain from boycotting, picketing, or any other form of demonstrations. Publicize your neutrality and the reasons for it.

PTA's Role During Contract Negotiations

Since 1897, the PTA has worked exclusively for the benefit of children. One of the Purposes of PTA which guides volunteers is:

To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education.

The importance of parent involvement in all aspects of a child's life cannot be overstated. The National PTA clearly states "A PTA's Rights and Responsibilities" that include:

- To participate within school board policy in the setting of school goals and assist in the review of teaching materials.
- To participate in decisions affecting policies, rules and regulations.
- To meet with appropriate school officials to discuss matters of mutual concern affecting children.

In New York State, Education Law gives to local school boards the authority and responsibility to fund and administer school districts. The school board president is the chief fiscal officer for the district. As school boards formulate their annual budgets, PTA members should provide information and assistance as part of school budget advisory committees comprised of all members of the school community.

Much of the school budget is now considered contingent expenses and teachers' salaries are a non-discretionary expense. This means two things:

1. The teacher salary will be paid as a contractual obligation to the employee whether or not a budget is passed by the voters.
2. Should the PTA or council choose to take a position on support of the school budget they need to have a clear understanding of the portions of the budget on which voter approval is sought.

In addition, PTAs must not perform tasks normally performed by school staff members. "Taking sides" in the discussion of employee contracts will, in the long run, be detrimental to the PTA goal established more than 100 years ago.

The PTA Purposes and Mission Statement must guide the activities of PTA units and council at all times. In order to "promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school and community", a PTA must work cooperatively.

PTAs must never take a position with regard to contract negotiations.