

XpertHR's Advice Will Help Employers Manage Politically Charged Atmosphere

Take Time to Discuss How Election Results May Affect the Workplace

NEW PROVIDENCE, N.J. -- (Nov. 1, 2016) During the run-up to Election Day 2016, employers must anticipate that workplace political discourse will intensify, according to XpertHR.

“Each day, as an embarrassing email is leaked or a cringe-worthy outtake is released, employees are naturally drawn to discuss the particulars of the latest news coverage, says Marta Moakley, a legal editor for XpertHR and author of a [post about politics in the workplace](#). “Unfortunately, some of those discussions may become heated and volatile, in part because of the high stakes – both personal and national – involved.”

Moakley recommends that employers take a proactive approach to these issues by implementing or enhancing policies that address bullying and harassment, social media, computer use and email, workplace conduct and political activities. Specific policies may be best, Moakley contends, because vague policies that emphasize a generalized notion of respect, for example, have been found by the National Labor Relations Board to infringe on employees' labor rights.

Employers can prepare for workplace issues related to Election Day, both challenges and opportunities, by following these simple steps:

- **Research relevant laws, template policies and applicability to the workplace.** Workplace policies should respect not only federal and state law, but should also advance organizational goals. Policies should be narrowly written so as to respect employees' rights to protected concerted activity under the National Labor Relations Act. In addition, policies that touch upon off-duty conduct should be harmonious with [state legal protections for employee activities outside of the workplace](#), including political activities.
- **Express your position.** An employer's stance on political activities in the workplace should be communicated by the implementation of relevant policies. Train supervisors and managers on these policies.
- **Act in accordance with organizational ethics codes, internal work rules and workplace policies.** Executives, HR, managers and supervisors should practice what they preach, Moakley says. Management should reinforce workplace policy positions. Supervisors should be prepared to respond to employee questions.
- **Discipline - when appropriate.** Employees should be subject to discipline in a consistent and fair manner. When it comes to political speech in the workplace, an employer should discipline for legitimate, business-related reasons.
- **Yield to common sense, especially post-election.** Take the time to dispassionately assess how election results may affect the workplace, especially with respect to ballot initiatives. Recognize the potential for growth that elections provide. Teachable workplace moments and training opportunities may result from contentious workplace discussions. Take this opportunity to continue to foster a tolerant and inclusive workplace culture because it's important to allow discussion of diverse views.

The key, Moakley says, is to emphasize respect, productivity and appropriate conduct moving forward. “After all, the workplace holiday party – that always dependable opportunity for bad behavior – is just around the corner.”

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XpertHR (www.xperthr.com) is a practical online service to help HR professionals comply with federal, state and municipal laws. More details on [politics in the workplace](#) can be found on XpertHR’s website.

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