



Information Bulletin

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O F F I C I A L

Hatch Act Spells Out Do's and Don'ts for Federal Employees

Anyone with access to a television or newspaper knows that this is an election year. The campaign advertisements, stump speeches, and door-to-door house calls by political candidates are in full swing. You may have even been approached to work for a particular candidate in his or her campaign, and for most federal employees, such participation is allowed. However, because you are an employee of the federal government, it is important to know what you can and cannot do in an election year or political campaign.

The political activity of government employees has been a concern to government officials since the days of Thomas Jefferson, who was among the first to express concern about the issue.

In answer to his concerns, an order was issued that stated, "while it is the right of any officer (federal employee) to give his vote at elections as a qualified citizen . . . it is expected that he will not attempt to influence the votes of others nor take part in the business of electioneering, that being deemed inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution . . ."

Despite Jefferson's concerns however, it would be another century and a half before Congress enacted a law regarding the political activities of government employees.

In 1939, Congress approved the **Hatch Act** to limit the potential activities of federal employees, employees of the District of Columbia, and certain employees of state and local governments. With passage of the Hatch Act, Congress determined that partisan activity by these employees should be limited so that public institutions could function fairly and effectively.

The Hatch Act is not an unconstitutional infringement on an employee's first amendment right to freedom of speech because it specifies that employees can retain the right to speak out on political subjects and candidates.

In 1993, Congress amended the Hatch Act and signed it into law, permitting most federal employees to take an active part in partisan political campaigns. While federal employees are still prohibited from seeking public office in partisan elections, most are free to work – while off duty – on partisan campaigns for the candidates of their choice. Employees are still prohibited from using their official position to engage in activities that associate the ERDC with any partisan political campaign or election, candidate, cause, or issue.

Under the Hatch Act, federal employees:

- **May** be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections
- **May** register and vote as they choose
- **May** assist in voter registration drives
- **May** express opinions about candidates and issues
- **May** contribute money to political organizations

- **May** attend political fund-raising functions
- **May** attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- **May** join and be an active member of a political party or club
- **May** sign nominating petitions
- **May** campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, municipal ordinances
- **May** campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- **May** make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- **May** distribute campaign literature in partisan elections
- **May** hold office in political clubs or parties, including serving as a delegate to a convention

Under the same Act, federal employees:

- **May not** use official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- **May not** knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before their agency
- **May not** solicit or receive political contributions unless both individuals are members of the same federal labor organization or employee organization and the one solicited is not a subordinate employee
- **May not** be candidates for public office in partisan elections
- **May not** engage in political activity while a) on duty; b) in a government office; c) wearing an official uniform; d) using a government vehicle
- **May not** wear partisan political buttons on duty

Nov. 5 is Election Day and all employees are encouraged to exercise their constitutional right to vote for the candidates of their choice.

The federal government has a longstanding policy of granting employees limited time off from work (i.e. excused absence) to vote in federal, state, county or municipal elections, or in referendums on any civic matter in their community. Agencies have discretionary authority to grant excused absence to the extent that such time off does not seriously interfere with agency operations.

As a general rule, where the voting polls are not open at least three hours either before or after employees' regular hours of work, they may be granted an amount of excused leave which will permit them to report for work 3 hours after the polls open or leave work 3 hours before the polls close, whichever requires the lesser amount of time off.

To view guidance on excused absence, you can visit

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2000/2000-12.htm>. To view full guidance on the Hatch

Act, you can visit http://www.osc.gov/hatch_a.htm.

International Conference on Military Geology and Geography Call for Abstracts

The International Conference on Military Geology and Geography will be held on June 15-18, 2003 at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. This is a multidisciplinary international conference convened for academics, researchers and practitioners to discuss the nexus between geology, geography, and military operations. Abstracts are due by Jan. 4, 2003.

For more information visit <http://www.dean.usma.edu/geo/gene.htm>

Barr Receives Achievement Medal for Civilian Service

Samuel Barr, TR-S, recently received the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for his work during Operation Enduring Freedom. Recognizing that rapid and safe detection of subsurface enemy bases would be essential to U.S. efforts, Barr applied basic science and previous research to develop low cost, ready to use techniques that use readily available devices to detect such structures. He then actively advocated these techniques to field units, which were quickly able to successfully apply his methodologies in the field, allowing U.S.



**TEC's Director, Bob Burkhardt, congratulates Barr. (l)
(Photo by Terri Stowell)**

forces to accomplish their missions much more safely than possible using traditional techniques.

Field Support Team

Members of the Field Support Team (FST) received certificates from Lt. Gen. James C. Riley, Experiment Director for their service and support contributing to the success of Millennium Change 2002/Army Transformation Experiment 2002.



FST members - standing l to r: Tom Cox, Bob Knowles, Kathy Kershner, SSgt. Irving Santiago, Sgt. Robert Corn, SSgt. Christopher Kennedy; kneeling: Fred Knudsen, SSgt. Jason Feser and Sgt. Brad Clement. Not pictured: Fred Pessaro. (Photo by Terri Stowell.)



(Photo by Terri Stowell.)

Welcome Aboard

Welcome aboard to Wanda Hart, TS-C. Wanda comes to TEC from the Fort Belvoir Garrison, Directorate of Installation Support. A native of Alabama, Wanda has three children, two stepchildren, nine grandchildren, and one great grandchild. In her spare time, she enjoys quilting and reading.

Handling Calls from the Media

When you receive calls from media representatives (local reporters, technical, trade, or general news media), please refer the caller to the Public Affairs Office (PAO) before responding to any questions. PAO will work with you, the reporter, and our command staff to determine how TEC as an organization can best respond. PAO will arrange an interview between you and the reporter if appropriate, and will answer any follow-up calls. This procedure will help TEC personnel prepare properly for answering media questions.

The intention of this request is not to restrict anyone's freedom to speak to the press. It will, however, ensure all concerned, when speaking as representatives of TEC, have the big picture and a complete background on the issue at hand. It also ensures the coordination with our executive staff, who are ultimately responsible for the image portrayed by TEC to the press.

Bulletin Publication Change

With the establishment of an ERDC-wide Information Bulletin, which will be published every 2 weeks, individual site Bulletins will now be published in the "off" weeks. Please keep this in mind when submitting articles and information for the site Bulletin. The next Alexandria Site Information Bulletin will be published on Oct. 31.

Commander's Mailbox

ERDC team members are reminded that an electronic mailbox has been established to allow employees to send questions and/or comments to the Commander. If an employee wishes to remain anonymous, his or her name will be deleted from the question before it is forwarded to the Commander for comment. Employees' questions will be answered via return e-mail. Answers to anonymous and frequently asked questions will be posted in the Employee Information Bulletin.

The address in Outlook is, "ERDC Commander." Again, all information is kept strictly confidential and all questions are addressed directly by the Commander.

FOR THE DIRECTOR

JACKIE L. BRYANT
Public Affairs Office

U N O F F I C I A L

Condolences

Condolences are extended to Judy Ehlen, TR-S, on the passing of her mother Mina Ehlen, on Oct. 2, following a short illness.

Halloween Bake Sale

Come if you dare to the Halloween Bake Sale on Oct. 31 from 8-10 a.m. in the Snack Bar. (Volunteers are needed.) Donate a baked good and receive \$1 off your Holiday Party ticket. A Silent Auction will be held on selected large treats from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Conference Room 6. Anyone dressed in a costume will receive a free Goodie Bag.

The Operations Division Holiday Party Committee sponsors the bake sale. POCs are Sheri Lee (428-6830) and Sara Quesenberry (428-6729/ICOM 2254).

Beautiful Life Christmas Wreathes and Garland

It's not too early to plan your Christmas decorations. Beautiful 26-inch fresh cut Balsam Wreath (\$18), 24-inch fresh cut Balsam Swag (\$14), 20-foot fresh cut Balsam Garland (\$25), 36-inch Mailbox Swag (\$20) and a Brass Wreath hanger (\$5) are available. A gift box (wreath and brass hanger and shipment) is available for \$30.

See or call Dick Marth in Room 862/IC 2528 to place your order by COB Nov. 14, 2002. Payment is due on Nov. 14, 2001. Orders will be delivered to TEC during the week of Dec. 3 2002. Proceeds benefit Boy Scout Troop 224.

Scout Popcorn

Cub Scout Pack 1149 (Robert Collins) is participating in the annual Boy Scouts of America fund-raiser by selling Trail's End gourmet popcorn products. Anyone interested on purchasing popcorn can sign up on the sheet located in the Snack Bar.

If you have any questions, contact Mike Collins at 428-7424.

Entertainment Books for Sell

Order Now! Entertainment Books for Northern Virginia/Washington, D.C. - only \$35. These books offer great discounts at local restaurants, sporting events, hotels, and more. Entertainment Books for other states and Canada may also be ordered (prices vary \$25-\$40). Proceeds go to *Children's Progress Unlimited*, an organization that trains and educates preschool autistic children and their parents. See Denise Hovanec, 428-6759, ICOM 2214, Room 203.

Scenes from Oktoberfest

By Terri Stowell



What should Tom and Dick (l to r) be looking at?



How about these guys!



Mike seems happy with the results.



From l to r: Steve, Theresa, Chris, Harry and Bill.