

OSC Issues Updated Hatch Act Guidance for Federal Employees After President Trump Becomes Candidate for Reelection

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C./March 5, 2018 -- The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) today issued updated Hatch Act [guidance](#) for federal employees now that President Trump has officially announced his candidacy for reelection in 2020.

The guidance reminds federal employees that the Hatch Act prohibits federal employees from engaging in political activity while on duty or in a federal room or building. For purposes of the Hatch Act, political activity is defined as activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, partisan political group, or candidate for partisan political office.

The guidance states that “the prohibition is broad and encompasses more than displays or communications (including in-person and via email or social media) that expressly advocate for or against President Trump’s reelection. For example, while on duty or in the workplace, employees may not: wear, display, or distribute items with the slogan ‘Make America Great Again’ or any other materials from President Trump’s 2016 or 2020 campaigns; use hashtags such as #MAGA or #ResistTrump in social media posts or other forums; or display non-official pictures of President Trump.”

For specific questions concerning social media and how it applies to communications about candidates for partisan political office, including the President, the guidance refers to OSC’s recently issued social media guidance under the Hatch Act, which can be found [here](#).

The guidance also states that OSC is available to answer any questions on Hatch Act compliance. In addition to offering broad guidance, OSC issues numerous written and verbal advisory opinions on specific Hatch Act questions. Past written advisory opinions are available [here](#). FAQs on the Hatch Act are available [here](#).

Penalties for Hatch Act violations range from reprimand or suspension to removal and debarment from federal employment and may include a civil fine.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC’s primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing, and to serve as a safe channel for allegations of wrongdoing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.