



Legislation Text

File #: 17-377, **Version:** 1

Adopt the County's Political Activities Policy, as amended

Published Notice Required? Yes ☐ No ☒
Public Hearing Required? Yes ☐ No ☒

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The Director of Human Resources recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the County's Political Activities Policy, as amended.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Human Resources reviewed the County's Political Activities Policy and recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the amendments, which are being made to clarify acceptable and unacceptable activities of employees related to a candidate, political party or ballot measure.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is a de minimus fiscal impact in making additional photocopies of the amended policy for distribution in County trainings. The policy is posted on the County's website.

DISCUSSION:

The County, as a governmental entity, has a need to present to the public a politically neutral environment in the election process. The public expects a fair and unbiased election process free of undue influence of public employees who may be seen as using their official positions to promote specific political goals. Employees may desire to express their free speech rights. In order to make clear the County's position with regards to political activities, the County has amended its policy to provide guidance to County employees as to what conduct involving political activities is acceptable and unacceptable within the workplace.

California Government Code section 3207 provides that a county may prohibit or restrict employees from engaging in political activity during working hours. County policy prohibits employees from engaging in political activity while on duty. The revisions to the policy define "political activity" as those activities directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for political office, ballot measure or political group. Further, the policy prohibits employees from wearing clothing, insignia or other campaign paraphernalia, which promotes the support of, or failure of, a political party, candidate for political office, political group or ballot measure/initiative, when that employee, in the performance of his/her duties, may come into contact with a County client or member of the public.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board of Supervisors could choose not to adopt the amended policy; however, staff does not recommend this alternative, as the amended policy provides further clarification as to what is allowable and safeguards the standard of maintaining a workplace that is political neutral for the constituents that are served by the County.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Notification of, and an opportunity, to meet on the proposed changes was provided to all bargaining unit representatives. Four recognized employee organizations requested to meet, and amendments to the policy were made in consideration of the feedback received.

The County Counsel's Office and the County Administrator's Office have reviewed the proposed revised policy and concur on the amended changes to the policy.

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION