Managing Employee Political Speech in the Workplace

# ✅ Checklists

## 1. Political Speech Risk Assessment Checklist

✅ Assess Workplace Culture: Determine if political speech is disrupting morale, productivity, or safety.

✅ Identify High-Risk Roles: Consider customer-facing, supervisory, or policy-making positions.

✅ Review Job Duties: Ensure duties are not compromised by political bias or expression.

✅ Monitor Complaints: Track employee or client complaints involving political discussions.

✅ Evaluate Existing Policies: Review code of conduct, anti-harassment, and social media policies.

## 2. Legal Compliance Checklist

✅ NLRA Protections: Ensure discipline does not violate Section 7 rights (protected concerted activity).

✅ State Law Restrictions: Identify states (e.g., CA, NY, CO) that protect political affiliation/expression.

✅ First Amendment Limitations: Confirm that your company is not a public employer.

✅ Campaigning Rules: Follow FEC and IRS rules (for nonprofits) about workplace political activity.

## 3. Policy Implementation Checklist

✅ Draft Clear Policy Language: Use neutral, content-agnostic rules (e.g., “no political slogans on uniforms”).

✅ Train Managers: Ensure consistent and legally compliant enforcement.

✅ Communicate to Staff: Include in handbook updates and training sessions.

✅ Enforce Consistently: Apply policies equally to all viewpoints.

✅ Create Complaint Mechanisms: Offer avenues for employees to raise concerns about workplace discourse.

# 📜 Model Policies

## Workplace Expression and Political Speech Policy

- Employees may not engage in political discussions that disrupt operations, create a hostile environment, or interfere with job duties.

- Wearing political slogans or distributing political materials during work hours or in shared workspaces is prohibited.

- Employees are free to engage in lawful political activities outside of work and off-duty.

- The Company will not retaliate against any employee for lawful political expression protected by applicable law.

## Code of Conduct Policy Addendum – Political Neutrality

- All employees are expected to treat one another with respect regardless of differing political opinions.

- Political discussions that escalate into arguments or impact team cohesion are subject to managerial intervention.

- Political solicitation or campaigning during working time or using company resources is not permitted.

## Social Media Policy – Political Content

- Employees may not present political opinions as representing the views of the employer.

- Employees may not use company logos or branding when posting political content.

- Political posts that harass or demean colleagues may be grounds for disciplinary action.

## Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy – Political Tensions

- Political speech that targets others based on protected characteristics (e.g., race, religion, gender) will be considered harassment.

- Any political commentary creating a hostile work environment may lead to corrective action.

## Meeting and Apparel Policy – Political Neutrality

- Employees may not wear or display political messaging in meetings, shared workspaces, or client interactions.

- Supervisors may address violations with a reminder or corrective action, depending on the impact.

# State-Specific Considerations: Rhode Island

• Rhode Island law (R.I. Gen. Laws § 28-6.1-1) prohibits discrimination based on political beliefs or membership in political organizations.

• Employers must be cautious when disciplining employees for political expression, particularly when off-duty or outside the workplace.

• Policies should clearly distinguish between disruptive workplace conduct and off-duty political activities.