

Electioneering in D.C. Polling Places

In response to various rumors circulating on the web and in the media, the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics would like to clarify the policy regarding electioneering at polling locations. D.C. Municipal Regulations sections 708.4, 708.5 and 708.8 cover restrictions on “political activity” within 50 feet of the entrance of a building used for voting. Section 708.8 clearly states that “the term ‘political activity’ shall include without limitation, any activity intended to persuade a person to vote for or against any candidate or measure...”

This means that if a voter is showing an outward sign of support for a candidate (i.e. wearing hats, buttons, t-shirts, etc.) the voter will be asked to remove or cover the article before entering the polling place.

This law was challenged in 1998 (Civil Action No. 98-02566) and the court found that, as a matter of law, section 708.4 restricts speech in a manner which is both reasonable and viewpoint-neutral.

The Board of Elections and Ethics asks that all voters in the District of Columbia turn out to vote in a manner consistent with the law.