PTA Advocacy Guidelines: Legal Guidelines
(http://www.pta.org/999.htm)

What PTAs Can Do Around Elections

It is election time again and many PTA leaders are having questions about what election related activities they can and can’t engage in. Local PTAs’ are non-profit organizations and fall under the IRS election guidelines for non-profits. To help you decide what activities your local PTA will get involved in we have provided a few quick can and can’t.

PTA Can:

• Host a candidate’s forum: all candidates appearing on the ballot for a given position must be invited to participate and given equal time to respond.
• Publish a candidate’s questionnaire: all candidates must be given the opportunity to answer the questionnaire and responses must be printed exactly as written.
• Register voters: volunteers must register all eligible voters regardless of party affiliation or political views.
• Remind members to vote.
• Educate candidates on issues important to PTA.

PTA Can Not:

• Invite only one candidate in an election to come speak to the PTA.
• Tell PTA members to only vote for a candidate who supports X position.
• Distribute any campaign materials on behalf of a candidate.
• Wear campaign buttons or t-shirts during a PTA meeting.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If I’m a PTA president am I allowed to make any political contributions?

A: Yes, as a citizen you can make political contributions. It is important to make it clear that the donation is coming from you as an individual and not the PTA.

Q: Can our PTA take a position on a local ballot measure or levy?

A: Yes, it is considered direct lobbying because the voters are the decision makers. It is important to remember that working on a ballot measure will count as lobby activities and is subject to IRS non-profit lobbying rules. Ask your state PTA for about any state laws that may apply.
Planning Election Activities
(http://www.pta.org/planning_election_activities.asp)

Know your dates and deadlines
When your PTA begins planning its election activities, there are some dates you need to know.

Remember, every state has different procedures and deadlines so you will need to check with either your state’s secretary of state office or your local county elections office to get this information. Start by finding out the following information:

- Does your state host primaries or caucuses?
- What is the last day to register to vote for the primary or caucus?
- Does your state have open or closed primaries? (Open primaries allow people to vote for any candidate they choose regardless of what party they are registered with.)
  - What is the date of the primary or caucus?
  - What is the last day to register to vote for the general election?
  - What is the date of the general election? (Note: The 2008 general election will be November 4.)
- What rules govern nonprofit voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives in your state?

Types of events and activities PTAs organize
Election season can be a great time for PTAs to get our message out and let candidates and voters know our positions on important issues impacting the lives of children. Below is a list of possible activities your PTA can do:

- Host a candidates’ forum.
- Hold a voter registration drive at your school.
- Publish a PTA voter’s guide.
- Send out a PTA candidate questionnaire and publish responses.
- Host a debate for local candidates for public office.
- Take positions on ballot measures.
- Run a get-out-the-vote drive with PTA members.
- Run a mock election at your school for students.
- Host a presidential debate-watching party.