



City of Oakland
Public Ethics Commission

Oakland Government Ethics Act (O.M.C. 2.25.060)
Fact Sheet



Perks of Office
Misuse of Public Funds, Campaign Solicitations

The Basic Rule

A public servant may not use or permit others to use public resources for a campaign activity or for personal non-City purpose. A public servant or candidate for City office may not solicit a political contribution from another City public servant.

Use of Public Funds for Non-City Purposes

State and local law prohibit the use of City resources for campaign or other non-City purpose. “Public resources” includes City staff time, property, and equipment such as City buildings, phones, computers, email accounts, copiers, and City letterhead.

Campaigns for Public Office

Public Servants, including City staff and officeholders, may not:

- Perform any campaign-related work while on City-paid time, or inside City buildings, or on City computers or email.
- Directly solicit contributions from other City public servants.
- Use their position to coerce or induce another person to support or oppose a candidate.

Ballot Measure Campaigns

A Public Servant may not use City resources to engage in ballot measure campaign activities, pay for campaign advocacy-related activities such as creating or sending mailers, advertisements, emails or campaign contributions, and may not use City computers to check ballot measure campaign emails or do other campaign-related work.

Note that in narrow circumstances, a Public Servant may use City resources to conduct preliminary research to place a measure on the ballot, or to provide objective, factual information and analysis about the purposes, provisions, or estimated impact of a ballot measure, if within the scope of the Public Servant’s official duties and authority.

Additional Restrictions

A Public Servant also may not use his or her City title (except when off duty for informational purposes only) or letterhead for non-City purposes and may not campaign for a candidate or ballot measure while in City uniform.

Contact the Public Ethics Commission for advice and assistance in complying with the law.

This fact sheet is designed to offer general guidance to public servants but does not substitute for the actual language contained in state and local law. There are narrow exceptions that allow “minimal and incidental use” of a City phone to call home, for example, or for a campaign solicitation that a City public servant sends to a significant segment of the population that happens to include public servants.