

PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Peaceful assembly or picketing to petition for redress of grievances is a cherished Constitutional right, particularly in an education environment, as long as it does not block ingress or egress to the campus or Vermont Law School facilities. In contrast, abuse of persons or property, or physical confrontations that deny freedom of passage or freedom of speech have no rightful place in the Vermont Law School community and will not be tolerated on campus. Those students who deny others the right to peaceful assembly shall be subject to the VLS Code of Conduct. The democratic principle of open discussion and presentation of opinions, popular or unpopular, carries with it the obligation to let individuals speak and to permit audiences to listen.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS

Policy Statement: VLS's institutional participation or intervention in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office is strictly forbidden. VLS's officials, administrators, faculty, staff, and student representatives are not authorized to participate, in their official capacity, in any political activity in support of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. When making statements in their individual capacity, such persons must indicate clearly that they are not representing VLS.

Consistent with its mission, VLS promotes and encourages the discussion of legal, social and political issues, and the free expression of viewpoints and ideas. Thus, VLS will fully support and respect the First Amendment rights of the individual members of the VLS community. Nothing in this Policy shall limit the rights of students, faculty or staff to express their opinions or to engage in political activity when acting in their individual capacities and not as representatives of VLS.

Purpose of the Policy: Tax Exempt Organization Restrictions

Under the Internal Revenue Code, VLS is absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. The prohibition applies to all campaigns including campaigns at the federal, state and local level. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure VLS's compliance with the IRS restrictions by establishing guidelines and procedures for School-sponsored political activity.

Applicability of Policy: All VLS students, faculty, staff, and student organizations. All VLS facilities, services and activities.

Activities Covered by Policy: For purposes of this policy, the term "political activity" is defined as any activity related to a candidate's political campaign for public office. The policy therefore affects lobbying, candidates' appearances on campus, voter registration drives, political rallies, fundraising events, dissemination of campaign materials, and publication of political statements.

POLICY

VLS shall not participate directly or indirectly in partisan political activity: VLS may not engage in partisan political activity, therefore no person may engage in such activity in VLS' name or on its behalf.

Use of VLS's name: Neither VLS's name nor seal may be used on letters or other materials intended for partisan political purposes. Whenever VLS's name appears as part of the name of a student organization, such as "VLS's Students for Candidate A," the organization must make clear that the opinions expressed are those of the individuals in the organization and not an official opinion of VLS or its trustees.

Use of VLS's resources: VLS's offices, addresses and email addresses may not be used as a return mailing address for partisan political mailings. VLS telephones may not be used for partisan political purposes. VLS's services, such as interdepartmental mail and mailing lists; equipment, such as copiers and facsimile machines; and supplies may not be used for partisan political purposes. No VLS employee may, as part of his or her job, be requested to perform tasks in any way related to partisan political purposes. This section shall not limit the

right of SBA-recognized political groups to use campus resources for their internal operations and activities, such as meetings, events unrelated to a political campaign, and general communications.

Use of VLS's email: Sending mass emails in support of or in opposition to a particular candidate is not permitted. Mass emails advertising a political event or otherwise addressing political issues are permissible, subject to the restrictions set on the Code of Conduct.

VLS-Sponsored Political Events: A VLS-Sponsored political event must be in the format of a candidate forum or debate. At a minimum, all viable candidates for a political office must be invited to participate, although VLS strongly encourages participation of all candidates. VLS must invite all candidates participating in the debate to any VLS or SBA sponsored social activity held in conjunction with the debate.

Procedures: Organizers shall submit an Event form for approval. Please contact Stephanie Brecko, Campus Scheduler, for applicable deadlines and additional information about scheduling requirements; see Event Planning in the Institutional Resources section of Student Handbook.

Promotional materials advertising the event must not contain explicit or implicit endorsements of any particular candidate, position on an issue, or political party.

At the beginning of the event, the following disclaimer should be read: "VLS does not endorse or oppose any political candidate or organization in connection with any campaign or election, and the use of the law school's facilities for this event should not be construed as the school's endorsement of, or opposition to, any candidate."

Organizers are responsible for communicating with the political candidates or their organizations to ensure awareness of and compliance with VLS guidelines.

Political Activity organized by student organizations

SBA-recognized student organizations can either sponsor or host political events. A *sponsored* event is an event that receives any kind of financial support from the SBA or a SBA-recognized student group. Student organizations *host* an event when they invite a political organization or candidate to visit the VLS campus, but do not provide funding for the event. Because the conduct of a student group may be attributable to VLS, the following restrictions apply.

General guidelines:

Organizers must request approval from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Diversity for any kind of political event. Contact the Dean's Office for the appropriate forms and applicable deadlines.

Organizers are responsible for communications with the political candidates or their organizations to ensure awareness of and compliance with VLS guidelines.

Fundraising events are prohibited.

On campus voter education, voter registration, and "get out the vote" drives must be non-partisan.

When in doubt about whether an event complies with VLS rules, do not guess: contact the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Diversity for further assistance.

Political events sponsored by the SBA or by any SBA-recognized student group: events fully or partially financed by the SBA or an SBA-recognized student group must comply with the following guidelines.

Promotional materials advertising the event must not contain explicit or implicit endorsements of any particular candidate, position on an issue, or political party.

The event must be in the format of a candidate forum or debate in which all viable candidates for a political office are invited to participate.

VLS or SBA-sponsored receptions and other social activities held in conjunction with the debate must include all candidates participating in the debate. If several student organizations organize the event, it is permissible to reserve different rooms for separate candidate "meet and greet" time at the conclusion of the general debate, so long as all candidates are provided with similar facilities, for an equal amount of time, and the activity is open to all.

At the beginning of the event, the following disclaimer should be read: “This event is sponsored by _____. The SBA and VLS do not endorse or oppose any political candidate or organization in connection with any campaign or election, and the use of the law school’s facilities for this event should not be construed as the school’s endorsement of, or opposition to, any candidate.”

Costs, Expenses, Fees and Honoraria: VLS will waive any facilities rental charge, but the sponsoring group will be responsible for other costs and expenses. Admission must be free.

Event organizers are responsible for contacting the candidates’ campaign officials, to ensure compliance with these rules.

Hosted events: Student organizations may host, but not sponsor, political events in a format other than that described in 5(b)(i) ONLY under the following conditions:

Funding:

The event shall not be financed with funds from any SBA-recognized group, the SBA or VLS.

The political candidate or political organization is responsible for facilities rental charges and all costs associated with the event, such as catering, security services, and audio-visual equipment set-up and operation. See the Event Scheduler for applicable rental fees. Again, payment for these costs cannot be made with any funds from any VLS or SBA-related account.

Absolutely no fundraising may occur during the event. The political candidate or political organization may charge as an admission fee only the amount necessary to cover reasonable costs of the event.

Promotional materials advertising the event may not state that VLS or the SBA endorse the invited political candidate or political organization. The promotional material must disclose the event’s sponsor.

At the beginning of the event, the following disclaimer should be read: “This event is sponsored by _____. The use of VLS’s facilities for this event does not constitute an endorsement. VLS does not endorse or oppose any political candidate or organization in connection with any campaign or election.”

Partisan registration activities during the event must occur within the space rented for the event. Setting tables or boards elsewhere on the VLS campus is not permitted.

Organizers are responsible for communicating with the political candidates or their organizations to ensure awareness of and compliance with VLS guidelines.

VLS and SBA- supported publications

Political editorials in The Forum or other VLS and SBA-supported publications are not restricted. Faculty and staff must clearly state that the views expressed are their own, and not those of VLS.

Bulletin boards for political expression are available on an equal basis to all political groups recognized by the SBA.

The policies of VLS and SBA-supported publications regarding political advertising must be non-partisan: either advertising is made available to all candidates on an equal basis, or is made unavailable to all.

Voter guides are documents or charts intended to help voters compare candidates on a set of issues. Because these guides carry a high risk of non-compliance with federal rules, the use of VLS or SBA funds or facilities in the preparation and distribution of voter guides requires previous approval by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Diversity.

Lobbying

Lobbying or attempting to influence federal, state, or local legislative action or a legislative or administrative official or staff member by using VLS’s name may only be authorized by VLS’s President or his designee. Permission from the Office of the President is necessary to ensure that any lobbying activity is conducted in compliance with applicable law.

This policy should not be interpreted as hindering VLS’s faculty, staff or students’ efforts to individually attempt to influence the legislative process and use their VLS titles for identification so long as each such

action is accompanied by a statement that the person is speaking as an individual and not as a VLS representative.