

## UNIFIED PERSONNEL SYSTEM

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TO: All County Employees

FROM: Holly J. Schoenherr, Ph.D., SHRM-SCP  
Director of Human Resources

SUBJECT: Political Activities and Acceptance of Gifts

DATE: October 5, 2016

Holly J. Schoenherr  
Director

In light of the upcoming local and national campaigns, I want to remind employees of certain rules regarding public service ethics and political activities. [Rule 8](#) of the Personnel Rules states that classified employees are “prohibited from taking an active part in a political campaign while on duty or during the time which the employee is expected to perform services for which compensation is received from the County.”

The prohibition against employees taking any **active** part in any political campaigns includes, but is not limited to “(a) circulation of or seeking signatures to any petition provided for by any charter or law; (b) distributing badges, colors, or other indications favoring or opposing an issue or a candidate for election or nomination to a federal, state, county or municipal public office; or (c) making, soliciting or knowingly accepting any political contribution in a building owned by a governmental entity.”

Employees are **not** prohibited from expressing their opinions on any candidate or issue, or from participating in any political campaign **during their off-duty hours**, so long as such activities are not in conflict with the provisions of Florida Statutes and the Florida Division of Elections opinions. Individual Appointing Authorities may have additional policies for exempt employees in their respective areas.

With regard to accepting gifts, the Pinellas County [Statement of Ethics](#) states that employees may “accept only authorized compensation for the performance of our duties and respectfully decline any offers of gifts or gratuities from those with whom we do business.” Examples may include lunch, chocolates and tickets to sporting events.

Further, the [Florida State Statutes, Section 112](#), states:

“No public officer, employee of an agency, or local government attorney or his or her spouse or minor child shall, at any time, accept any compensation, payment, or thing of value when such public officer, employee, or local government attorney knows, or, with the exercise of reasonable care, should know, that it was given to influence a vote or other action in which the officer, employee, or local government attorney was expected to participate in his or her official capacity.”

If you are at all uncertain about these restrictions, please refer to the [Ethics Guide](#) or [Sec. 106.15\(4\), Florida Statutes](#), or speak to your manager or supervisor for clarification. In addition, you may contact the Human Resources Department for further information.