Advocacy as a Federal Employee

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The Hatch Act

A. limits certain political activities of federal employees
B. to ensure that federal programs are administered in a nonpartisan fashion
C. to protect federal employees from political coercion in the workplace
D. to ensure that federal employees are advanced based on merit and not based on political affiliation.
Courts decided Hatch Act is not an unconstitutional infringement on first amendment right to freedom of speech: “employees retain the right to speak out on political subjects and candidates.” (Office of Special Counsel, 2005)

Hatch Act Reform Amendments (1993)

- may take an active part in partisan political management and partisan political campaigns (still may not seek public office in partisan elections)
- may work *while off duty* on partisan campaigns of candidates
CAN DO: Off duty, Not in workplace or gov’t vehicle, No official uniform/insignia
(hatchact.osc.gov)

- May join, be active, and hold office in partisan groups
- May sign and circulate nominating petitions
- May attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- May campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- May make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- May express opinions about political issues
- May be a candidate in a non-partisan election
CANNOT DO
(hatchact.osc.gov)

- May not be candidate in partisan election
- May not invite subordinates to political events or suggest they engage in political activity
- May not solicit, accept, or receive political contributions (including hosting or inviting others to fundraisers) UNLESS both persons are members of the same employee organization, the solicitation is for the organization’s political action committee AND the person is not a subordinate and you are not on duty or in the workplace
- May not wear, display, or distribute partisan material in workplace or on duty
- May not make political contributions while on duty or in workplace
- May not use e-mail or social media for political activity at workplace or on duty hours
Definition of political activity in social media context: “sharing, liking, or retweeting a post from a partisan group or candidate for partisan office, or posting and/or tweeting a comment about a partisan group or candidate for partisan office.”

May use social media to engage in political activity (i.e. “any activity directed at success or failure of a partisan political party or partisan political group”), except while on duty or in the workplace.

May include official title/position on a social media profile.

May not use social media to solicit political contributions AT ANY TIME.

May not use social media account in your official capacity to engage in political activity AT ANY TIME.

While on duty or in the workplace, may not like or follow the social media page of a candidate for partisan office or partisan group.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADVOCATE

Do you believe in what you are advocating for?  Are you passionate?
What is your level of knowledge of the issue?
How motivated to achieve the goal or parts of it, the plan or some of it?
How committed are you to being persistent – days, months, years?
Are you focused through a view coming from your area of Psychology?
Are you able to incorporate the views of other areas of Psychology?
How open are you to working with those from other disciplines?
Advocacy - Learned Behavior

**BUT:** Experience

Practice

**BUT:** Existing Skills as a Psychologist

(Social Interactions, Perception, Motivation, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making)

**SO.....** Moving into the Role as Advocate
THE MESSAGE

❖ Clarity
❖ Consistency
❖ Context
❖ Credibility
ADVOCACY: THE MESSAGE DEFINED

Clarity --- Clear, data-based, well-presented

Consistency --- Goal Identified and Plan of Action Formed

Context --- Specific and/or Ongoing (e.g. in the process of day-to-day work)

Credibility --- Relationship is Critical: Honesty and Trust as Key Elements
WHO IS YOUR LISTENER?

Basic premise of psychotherapy – start where your patient is - same applies here!

- What do you know about the knowledge of your listener about Psychology or the preconceived notions about psychologists?
- What does the listener know about the issue and/or believe about the issue?
- Does the listener value in a positive way something about the issue?
- Does the listener believe that Psychology has something of worth to add?
- Where does Psychology and/or your work fit into the listener’s priorities?
- What is needed to make a connection with the listener?
- What do you need from that listener (all or some part of your goal?)
- Can the advocacy with this listener lead to something mutually beneficial?
Applying Advocacy to your position in the VA

➢ Returning to the Development of an Advocate
➢ Returning to the Message Defined
➢ Returning to The Listener
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Converting to the VA Workplace

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QUESTIONS and COMMENTS

- What questions still need to be answered?
- Situations you have encountered in your work environment?
- Are you planning to actively advocate?
Thank you

- If you plan to advocate, I wish you success and much enjoyment!!!