

Subpart H—Restrictions and Prohibitions on Political Activities and Lobbying

§ 2556.700 Who is covered by this subpart?

(a) All VISTAs, including leaders and summer associates, are subject to this subpart.

(b) All employees of VISTA sponsors and subrecipients whose salaries or other compensation are paid, in whole or in part, with VISTA grant assistance are subject to this subpart.

(c) All VISTA sponsors and subrecipients are subject to this subpart.

§ 2556.705 What is prohibited political activity?

For purposes of the regulations in this subpart, “prohibited political activity” means an activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.

§ 2556.710 What political activities are VISTAs prohibited from engaging in?

(a) A VISTA may not use their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the result of an election.

(b) A VISTA may not use their official authority or influence to coerce any individual to participate in political activity.

(c) A VISTA may not use their official VISTA program title while participating in prohibited political activity.

(d) A VISTA may not participate in prohibited political activities in the following circumstances:

(1) While they are on duty;

(2) While they are wearing an article of clothing, logo, insignia, or other similar item that identifies AmeriCorps, the VISTA program, or one of AmeriCorps’ other national service programs;

(3) While they are in any room or building occupied in the discharge of VISTA duties by an individual employed by the sponsor; and

(4) While using a vehicle owned or leased by a sponsor or subrecipient, or while using a privately-owned vehicle in the discharge of VISTA duties.

§ 2556.715 What political activities may a VISTA participate in?

(a) Provided that paragraph (b) of this section is fully adhered to, a VISTA may:

(1) Express their opinion privately and publicly on political subjects;

(2) Be politically active in connection with a question that is not specifically identified with a political party, such as a constitutional amendment, referendum, approval of a municipal ordinance, or any other question or issue of similar character;

(3) Participate in the nonpartisan activities of a civic, community, social, labor, professional, or similar organization; and

(4) Participate fully in public affairs, except as prohibited by other Federal law, in a manner that does not compromise their efficiency or integrity as a VISTA, or compromise the neutrality, efficiency, or integrity of AmeriCorps or the VISTA program.

(b) A VISTA may participate in political activities set forth in paragraph (a) of this section as long as such participation:

(1) Does not interfere with the performance of, or availability to perform, their assigned VISTA project duties;

(2) Does not interfere with their provision of service in the VISTA program;

(3) Does not involve any use of VISTA assistance, resources or funds;

(4) Would not result in the identification of the VISTA as being a participant in or otherwise associated with the VISTA program;

(5) Is not conducted during scheduled VISTA service hours; and

(6) Does not interfere with the full-time commitment to remain available for VISTA service without regard to regular working hours, at all times during periods of service, except for authorized periods of leave.

§ 2556.720 May VISTAs participate in political organizations?

(a) Provided that paragraph (b) of this section is fully adhered to, and in accordance with the prohibitions set forth in § 2556.710, a VISTA may:

(1) Be a member of a political party or other political group and participate in its activities;

(2) Serve as an officer of a political party or other political group, a member of a national, State, or local committee of a political party, an officer or member of a committee of a political group, or be a candidate for any of these positions;

(3) Attend and participate fully in the business of nominating caucuses of political parties;

(4) Organize or reorganize a political party organization or political group;

(5) Participate in a political convention, rally, or other political gathering; and

(6) Serve as a delegate, alternate, or proxy to a political party convention.

(b) A VISTA may participate in a political organization as long as such participation complies with the restrictions set out in paragraphs (b)(1) through (6) of § 2556.715.

(1) Does not interfere with the performance of, or availability to perform, their assigned VISTA project duties;

(2) Does not interfere with the provision of service in the VISTA program;

(3) Does not involve any use of VISTA assistance, resources or funds;

(4) Would not result in the identification of the VISTA as being a participant in or otherwise associated with the VISTA program;

(5) Is not conducted during scheduled VISTA service hours; and

(6) Does not interfere with the full-time commitment to remain available for VISTA service without regard to regular working hours, at all times during periods of service, except for authorized periods of leave.

§ 2556.725 May VISTAs participate in political campaigns?

(a) Provided that paragraph (b) of this section is fully adhered to, and in accordance with the prohibitions set forth in § 2556.710, a VISTA may:

(1) Display pictures, signs, stickers, badges, or buttons associated with political parties, candidates for partisan political office, or partisan political groups, as long as these items are displayed in accordance with the prohibitions set forth in § 2556.710;

(2) Initiate or circulate a nominating petition for a candidate for partisan political office;

(3) Canvass for votes in support of or in opposition to a partisan political candidate or a candidate for political party office;

(4) Endorse or oppose a partisan political candidate or a candidate for political party office in a political advertisement, broadcast, campaign literature, or similar material; and

(5) Address a convention caucus, rally, or similar gathering of a political party or political group in support of or in opposition to a partisan political candidate or a candidate for political party office.

(b) A VISTA may participate in a political campaign as long as such participation:

(1) Does not interfere with the performance of, or availability to perform, their assigned VISTA project duties;

(2) Does not interfere with the provision of service in the VISTA program;

(3) Does not involve any use of VISTA assistance, resources or funds;

(4) Would not result in the identification of the VISTA as being a participant in or otherwise associated with the VISTA program;

(5) Is not conducted during scheduled VISTA service hours; and

(6) Does not interfere with the full-time commitment to remain available for VISTA service without regard to regular working hours, at all times during periods of service, except for authorized periods of leave.

§ 2556.730 May VISTAs participate in elections?

(a) Provided that paragraph (b) of this section is fully adhered to, and in accordance with the prohibitions set forth in § 2556.710, a VISTA may:

(1) Register and vote in any election;

(2) Act as recorder, watcher, challenger, or similar officer at polling places;

(3) Serve as an election judge or clerk, or in a similar position; and

(4) Drive voters to polling places for a partisan political candidate, partisan political group, or political party.

(5) Participate in voter registration activities.

(b) A VISTA may participate in elections as long as such participation: