



# **Club Involvement in Federal Races**

*2018 Guidelines*

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN**

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As local clubs work to support Republican candidates, club leaders must ensure that their club's activities comply with federal and state campaign finance laws. Laws vary significantly among the states, so club leaders should seek specific advice about complying with the laws of the state in which their clubs are organized.

The laws are often complicated, and compliance can be a challenge. Given the penalties that can be assessed by both federal and state campaign finance agencies, club leaders should seek legal advice before making a club contribution to a candidate or planning a program or activity. When it comes to campaign finance, it's always better to ask permission than to seek forgiveness.

## **What Every Club Can Do**

### *Communicating with the Club's Members*

Club leaders may always communicate with club members about federal elections. Candidates may also be invited to communicate with club members, including soliciting contributions and volunteer service from the members. However, facilitating communication with the general public or anyone outside of the club's membership is subject to restrictions, particularly if costs are incurred.

Featuring plans for the club to participate in Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activity in the club's newsletter, inviting a candidate to a club meeting to give an update on his or her campaign, and sending an e-mail update to club members on upcoming candidate events are all acceptable communications with club members.

Encouraging the club's members to volunteer their services in support of a candidate or a party committee can be the most effective way to support Republican candidates. Volunteer services are not considered contributions, so club members can volunteer without limit. Any expenditures made by the campaign or a party committee would be reported by them, but the club would not be required to report anything. A Republican Women's Night at the party phone bank or a Republican Women's mail stuffing session at a campaign headquarters are acceptable ways to promote such volunteer service.

## **Other Options for Clubs**

There are other strategies clubs can consider for supporting Republican candidates.

- Encourage members to make direct contributions to campaign and party committees. As long as such contributions don't pass through the club treasury, there's no reporting issue for the club.
- A club could establish its own federally-registered PAC, allowing it to raise and contribute more than \$1,000 to all federal candidates combined. A PAC would have a separate limit for each federal candidate. When a PAC is first established, it has the same contribution limit as an individual (\$2,700 per candidate per election in 2018). If it meets the requirements to become a multi-candidate PAC, it may contribute up to \$5,000 per candidate per election.
- Within limitations, a club can spend funds on electioneering and even contributions to candidates. The laws governing these are complicated, and we encourage clubs to consult legal counsel before making political expenditures.

With care, local clubs can provide critical support to Republican candidates within the strictures of federal and state laws. Club leaders should always seek advice expending funds on activities in support of candidates.

## **For More Information**

The Federal Election Commission's Information Division can answer questions about federal law anonymously. The Information Division can be reached at (800) 424-9530, by selecting option 6, or directly at (202) 694-1100. Some states have a similar service.