

## *NONPARTISAN POLICY*

Any use of the Pennsylvania PTA name for legislative or electoral activity requires prior authorization from the Pennsylvania PTA. No activity engaged in by any unit or council should suggest or imply the support of the National PTA or Pennsylvania State PTA.

One of the Purposes of the PTA is “to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.” It is by educating its members — and through them, the general public — on the impact of issues affecting children and youth, that PTAs can best influence the course of action of those who make policy decisions, thereby achieving the Purposes of the PTA.

PTA units may be involved in legislative activities.

- By supporting or opposing local issues that affect children or services to children in their respective communities; and
- By supporting — or not openly opposing — Pennsylvania PTA positions on legislation needed to achieve the Purposes of the PTA.

To retain tax-exempt status and continue to receive tax-deductible contributions, those PTAs that are recognized as being tax exempt under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3) may not (1) devote more than an insubstantial part of their activities to influence legislation (generally interpreted as not exceeding five percent of total expenditures); (2) participate in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for national, state, or local public office.

A unit’s failure to comply with these restrictions may endanger council, State and National PTAs IRC 501(c)(3) status.

Legislative activities must not exceed the limitations placed upon the Pennsylvania State PTA and its units under the federal tax laws. In order to ensure that the limitations are not exceeded, records should be kept with respect to the amount of time, money, and volunteer activity such efforts involve.

PTA must never support or oppose political parties or candidates, including those running for school boards on nonpartisan slates. However, PTA may adopt a position expressing its support for or opposition to issues dealing with the health, safety,

education, or general well-being of children and youth, but only to the extent permissible with respect to the requirements of each PTA's tax-exempt status. Nothing in the law or in PTA bylaws prohibits members as individuals from exercising their civic responsibilities in personal and partisan ways, including running for offices themselves.

## **A PTA LEADER'S ROLE IN CANDIDATE ELECTIONS**

PTA members are often the individuals with the most knowledge and awareness of their communities' needs. Their community activities qualify them to take leadership roles in election campaigns. However, PTA leaders who are considering taking a leadership role on behalf of a candidate are strongly urged to avoid even the appearance that their private activities have, in any way, the endorsement, approval, or support of PTA. Discretion must be used by the current PTA president, because he/she is the official spokesperson for the PTA organization.

Activities on behalf of any candidate must be conducted separately and apart from any activities of the PTA organization. A current PTA officer/ board member may not use his/her title or the name of the PTA to endorse a candidate even for purposes of identification in any print, electronic, or website candidate literature (e.g., campaign mailer, ballot measure, candidate stationary).

Although federal election regulations do not prohibit the use of organizational affiliation for identification purposes, the Pennsylvania PTA sets a standard which is higher than law. Failure to comply may result in a violation of Pennsylvania PTA policy.

For the purpose of this policy, all elections involving candidates are defined as partisan elections, even those for "nonpartisan" offices such as school board or city council.

## **CANDIDATES' AND ISSUES FORUMS**

During the course of a campaign, candidates for public office do not discuss political or legislative matters at PTA meetings unless appearing at a candidates' forum where all candidates for designated offices have been invited to speak. The invitations must be sent to all candidates and must be sent by certified mail with return receipt requested.

PTAs may conduct candidates' forums alone or as part of a coalition with other nonpartisan groups. All candidates for a specific office must be invited to present their views. Whether or not a candidate chooses to appear is the decision of each candidate. A nonpartisan moderator should be in charge of the meeting, and fair procedures must be established and agreed to in advance. Similar procedures should be followed for an issues forum.

## **PTA LEADERS SEEKING ELECTION TO PUBLIC OFFICE**

The Pennsylvania PTA recognizes the fact that the experience and interest gained by its members through participation in PTA activities make them particularly qualified to serve the community as elected officials.

PTA officers and those members who are likely to be recognized locally as being active PTA spokesmen or leaders, and who choose to enter the political or legislative arenas in their private (i.e., non-PTA) capacities are strongly urged to avoid even the appearance that their private activities have, in any way, the endorsement, approval, or support of the PTA.

PTA leaders who consider public office while they serve as PTA spokesmen are urged to weigh the impact their candidacy, appointment, or election could have on PTA's tax-exempt status.

Members who choose to seek public office may neither request nor receive PTA endorsement at any time, but may list their PTA service as part of their qualifications.

Neither government regulations nor PTA policy prohibit unit, council or State PTA officers and other leaders from serving on commissions or other boards active in areas of concern to the PTA provided that such membership is not designed to support partisan (i.e., any political party or any candidate) interests.

## **NONPARTISAN POLICY AND MEMBERSHIP ON SCHOOL BOARDS**

The Pennsylvania PTA recognizes the fact that the experiences and interest gained by its members through participation in PTA activities make them particularly qualified to serve the community as members of local school boards of education.

PTA officers may serve as members of school boards as long as they do not seek PTA endorsement to support their election. If a PTA officer runs for a school board, no endorsement by the PTA should be given or implied. The inclusion of a reference to PTA service or honors on a list of the candidate's qualifications for office is not considered to be an exploitation of PTA membership.

Any activity in support of any specific candidate for a school board position on the part of any local parent-teacher unit, council or state PTA branch is prohibited under the nonpartisan policy of the National PTA and the Pennsylvania PTA.