



Navigating the Election in the Workplace - Toolkit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION
- FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE & PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT
- HANDLING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS & MEDIA
- SUPPORTING TEAM PARTNERS DURING ELECTION TIME
- MANAGING UPSET AROUND ELECTION RESULTS
- LEGAL OBLIGATIONS & COMPANY POLICIES
- RESOURCES FOR MANAGERS & TEAM PARTNERS
- CONCLUSION

Election periods can be emotionally charged, creating an atmosphere where tensions may rise and emotions run high. As managers, it is essential to foster a positive, safe, and respectful environment that encourages inclusivity and mutual respect. During these times, Team Partners may feel overwhelmed or distracted, whether by the political climate, election media, or the results themselves.

By actively supporting Team Partners—especially those who may be struggling emotionally or mentally—you can ensure that your team remains focused, engaged, and respectful. This toolkit is designed to help you guide your team through the election period while maintaining professionalism and unity, reinforcing the values of respect and empathy that are central to a thriving workplace culture.

1. Fostering an Inclusive & Professional Environment

Elections can stir strong opinions and emotions. It's essential to create an inclusive environment where Team Partners feel respected regardless of their political affiliations. Consider the following steps:

- **Encourage Respectful Dialogue:** Remind Team Partners of UniFirst's commitment to a respectful workplace. While it's okay to discuss elections, conversations should be constructive, civil, and free from hostility.
- **Model Neutrality:** As a leader, it's important to remain neutral in the workplace, avoiding any discussions that might be seen as taking sides politically.
- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Emphasize that while conversations may happen, Team Partners must avoid disrupting workflows or making others uncomfortable. Provide guidance on how to navigate these topics with care during work hours and redirect when necessary.

2. Handling Political Discussions & Media in the Workplace

To ensure the workplace remains focused and professional, consider the following practices:

- **Limit Media Exposure:** Set guidelines around the public display of election-related media (e.g., TV or radio in common areas) to avoid stirring emotions during work hours. Consider neutral programming instead.
- **Address Media Upset:** If election coverage or results upset Team Partners, be prepared with mental health resources to help Team Partners manage stress.

3. Supporting Team Partners During Election Time

During election periods, Team Partners may feel anxious or distracted. Offer support by:

- **Promoting Wellbeing:** Share resources related to mental health support and encourage Team Partners to use wellness programs or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) if they feel stressed. Here are some examples:
 1. [Headspace](#) (meditation and mindfulness)
 2. [Calm](#) (stress relief and sleep tools)
 3. [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (1-800-273-TALK) for immediate support
- **Provide Flexibility:** Consider offering flexible working hours or time off on Election Day to allow Team Partners to vote, ensuring all feel supported in exercising their civic duty.

Navigating the Election in the Workplace - Toolkit



4. Managing Upset Around Election Results

After the election, emotions may run high, especially if the results are contentious. Managers should:

- **Acknowledge Feelings:** Recognize that Team Partners may experience a range of emotions, from joy to disappointment or frustration. Encourage open dialogue but within respectful and professional boundaries.
- **Focus on Unity:** Reinforce the importance of maintaining a united workplace despite political differences. Remind Team Partners of shared goals and values that transcend politics.
- **Address Conflict Promptly:** If tensions rise or conflicts emerge, address them immediately. Utilize your HR department or conflict resolution resources to mediate if necessary.

5. Legal Obligations & Company Policies

It's crucial for managers to be aware of legal requirements and company policies regarding elections:

- **Voting Leave:** Ensure Team Partners are aware of any state or federal laws regarding time off for voting and communicate the company's policy on voting leave.
- **Political Expression in the Workplace:** Be familiar with UniFirst's policies on political speech and activities during work hours - [UniFirst Policy Tech](#)
- **Anti-Discrimination Policies:** Remind Team Partners of the company's stance on discrimination and harassment. Political beliefs are not a protected category, but ensure Team Partners are not treated unfairly or harassed because of their political views.

6. Resources for Managers & Team Partners

Equip managers and Team Partners with resources to navigate the election period:

- **Mental Health Resources:** Provide information on EAP programs, mental health hotlines, and meditation apps to help Team Partners manage stress.

Some examples include:

1. EAP Hotline: 855-927-6365 | www.guidanceresources.com
2. [BetterHelp](#) (online therapy platform)
3. [Mental Health America](#) (resources for dealing with election stress)

If a Team Partner brings up politics in a team meeting:

- **Response:** "I understand that the elections are on everyone's mind, but let's try to keep our discussions focused on work. If you'd like to discuss these topics outside of work hours, that's fine, but here we want to ensure a neutral and productive environment."

If a political argument arises between Team Partners:

- **Response:** "I appreciate that we all have different perspectives, but it's important we keep our conversations respectful and professional. Let's shift the focus back to our work and agree to respect each other's opinions."

If a Team Partner feels anxious or upset about the political climate:

- **Response:** "I understand that this can be a difficult time. If you need support, please feel free to reach out to me, HR, or use the Employee Assistance Program. It's important we take care of ourselves and each other."

Conclusion: Ensuring a Healthy Workplace During the Election

Navigating the election period in the workplace can be challenging, but with the right approach, it can also be an opportunity to reinforce unity, respect, and support among your team. By fostering an inclusive and professional environment, you help ensure that all Team Partners feel respected, no matter their political views.

Key steps to take include:

1. Encouraging respectful and civil dialogue, while setting clear boundaries around political discussions.
2. Supporting Team Partners emotionally and mentally, offering flexibility, wellness resources, and safe spaces to decompress if necessary.
3. Managing post-election tensions by acknowledging diverse emotions, focusing on unity, and addressing conflicts immediately.
4. Ensuring awareness of legal obligations and company policies, including those related to voting leave and political expression.

By implementing these strategies, you contribute to a healthy, harmonious workplace where Team Partners can thrive during the election period. As a manager, your leadership is crucial in guiding your team through this time with empathy, respect, and a focus on the well-being of all. Together, we can ensure that the workplace remains a safe, inclusive space where every Team Partner feels valued and supported, regardless of the political climate. Should you have further questions or concerns, please reach out to diversityandculture@unifirst.com.