

GUIDANCE: *Access to Campus for Political Activity*

The Office of Governmental Relations and the Office of Legal Affairs offer the following guidance for UTRGV-affiliated organizations and departments, candidates for elected office and their staff, and persons in support or opposition to an issue or proposition on a local, state, or federal election ballot, for accessing a UTRGV campus to engage in political activity.

This guidance includes definitions for key terms at the end of the document, a quick-reference addendum for candidates and campaigns about electioneering allowed on campus during election periods when UTRGV hosts election polling location(s), and a map of the designated electioneering site(s).

UTRGV encourages expressive activities of its students and employees (and, to the extent applicable, members of the public) on its campuses. At the same time, UTRGV also is responsible for ensuring these expressive activities comply with applicable law and do not interfere with UTRGV's educational mission, academic programs or administrative processes. Operating and maintaining an effective and efficient educational institution requires the implementation of time, place, and manner regulations for expressive activities throughout all areas of UTRGV's campuses.

As required by [Senate Bill 2972](#) (89th Regular Session), as of September 1, 2025, UTRGV campuses, facilities, and property generally now are considered **a limited public forum** open only to expressive activities of students and employees. [Section 51.9315, Texas Education Code](#), which addresses expressive activities on the campuses of public colleges and universities in Texas, was amended by [Senate Bill 2972](#) to make this important change among others.

What does this mean? Unaffiliated groups and individuals – which includes candidates for elected office and their staff – may engage in expressive activities outdoors on UTRGV property only (a) in specifically ***designated public forums***, (b) as permitted in an area near a polling location on campus designated under the *Texas Election Code* when polls are open during the early voting period or voting period, or (c) as a speaker invited by a registered student organization, faculty organization, or staff organization.

What has not changed? Any expressive activities on the property of or in buildings owned or controlled by UTRGV – whether by students, faculty, staff, or a recognized student organization, faculty organization, or a staff organization, or members of the public (only in ***designated public forums***) – must be conducted in compliance with the provisions of *Rules and Regulations* of The University of Texas System Board of

Regents ("[Regents' Rules](#)"), the approved rules and regulations of UTRGV, and applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

ACCESS TO CAMPUS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY & RELATED RESTRICTIONS

UTRGV property and buildings may be used by political candidates only as authorized by the *Regents' Rules* and UTRGV policies, and applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Pertinent regulations and restrictions are discussed below.

BACKGROUND – GENERAL RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FOR UTRGV AND EMPLOYEES

Under Texas law, UTRGV may not use any money under its control to finance or otherwise support an individual's candidacy. Just as important, a UTRGV employee may not use official authority or a program administered by UTRGV to interfere with or affect the results of an election or nomination of a candidate or to achieve any other political purpose.

Practically speaking, *what does this mean for UTRGV employees, including student employees?* It means an employee may not use UTRGV letterhead, computer hardware or software (including email systems), copiers, faxes, telephones or other resources or services to support or urge a vote for or against a candidate – and even minimal use is prohibited. It means that an internal mail system may not be used to distribute political advertising. It also means that employees may not engage in activities supporting or opposing a candidate during paid work time, unless accrued compensatory or vacation time is used or a leave of absence without pay is granted for this purpose. And employees may not use public funds to make political contributions to a candidate or political committee or coerce employees or other persons to make or not make political contributions.

CANDIDATE SPEAKING TO A REGISTERED STUDENT ORGANIZATION, FACULTY ORGANIZATION, OR STAFF ORGANIZATION

1. A candidate for political office is considered an off-campus guest speaker and generally must gain access to UTRGV's **limited public forum** (defined below) through the invitation of a registered student organization, faculty organization, staff organization, or UTRGV's student government. (See [Section 2, Rule 40501, Regents' Rules](#)). Organizations may not invite the public at large to events in UTRGV buildings.
2. An application for use of UTRGV buildings, grounds, or facilities to present a candidate for political office must be made to the President of UTRGV at least 48 hours before the time the event is scheduled to take place. Approval of the application may include reasonable and nondiscriminatory time, place, and manner restrictions for the event set by UTRGV. (See [Section 2, Rule 40501, Regents' Rules](#)).
 - a. If permission is granted, such activities must be conducted in a manner that does not disturb or interfere with the academic programs or administrative activities of UTRGV or any program or activity conducted by the UT System or UTRGV; does not interfere with entry to or exit from a building, structure, or facility; does not interfere with the flow of pedestrians or vehicular traffic on

sidewalks or streets or at places of ingress or egress to and from property, buildings, or facilities; does not harass, or intimidate the person or persons being solicited; and does not violate applicable state, federal, or local laws and regulations. (See [Section 2, Rule 80103, Regents' Rules](#)).

- b. To enhance event safety, the UTRGV Police Department, other law enforcement personnel, or UTRGV Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management personnel maintain the authority to prohibit or control the use of any items, devices, or liquids that may create safety hazards or the potential for injury or harm to event participants or attendees.
- c. Costs incurred from such events shall be borne by the sponsoring campus organization. The following list contains examples of services and other costs that may be incurred:
 - i. Facilities Planning (e.g., custodial services, event set-up/break down, grounds, maintenance)
 - ii. Equipment and furniture rentals
 - iii. Parking and Transportation Services
 - iv. UTRGV Police or other law enforcement services
3. The registered student organization, faculty organization, or staff organization must organize and retain control over the event and may not simply be used as a “front” for an off-campus person or organization.
4. The registered student organization, faculty organization, or staff organization may not jointly co-sponsor an event with an off-campus person or organization in violation of [Rule 80105 of the Regents' Rules](#), which requires a jointly sponsored event contain an educational component as determined by UTRGV.
5. The registered student organization, faculty organization, or staff organization must make clear that the organization – and not UTRGV – invited the speaker, and that the views expressed do not represent the views of UTRGV or The UT System. (See [Section 7 of Appendix G, UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures Policy ADM 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly](#).)

ELECTIONEERING AT A POLLING LOCATION DURING EARLY VOTING OR ELECTION DAY

Frequently, a UTRGV campus building may be used as a polling location for a public election held pursuant to federal, State, or local laws. When hosting a polling location, UTRGV reserves the right to designate one or more areas in the vicinity of that polling location for candidates to display signs, distribute campaign-related materials, or electioneer generally. During an early voting period or on an election day when UTRGV is hosting a polling location, a candidate for political office (or campaign staff) may electioneer for or against any candidate, measure, or political party in the specially designated electioneering area(s) – see map attached to the end of this guidance. The following rules apply to these campaign activities:

1. Electioneering activities must be conducted in a manner that do not disturb or interfere with the academic programs or administrative activities of UTRGV or any program or activity that is conducted by or is authorized by UTRGV; do not interfere with entry to or exit from a building, structure, or facility; do not interfere with the flow of pedestrians or vehicular traffic on sidewalks or streets or at places of ingress and

egress to and from property, buildings, or facilities; do not harass, or intimidate the person or persons being solicited; and do not violate applicable State, federal, or local laws or regulations.

2. Electioneering activities must comply with the time, place, and manner restrictions of [UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 02-300](#) Speech, Expression, and Assembly (including its appendices), which address in detail distribution of literature; use of signs, banners, tables and exhibits; amplified sounds, guest speakers; and more. Candidates and campaigns also must comply with Hidalgo County or Cameron County election department guidelines (as applicable) for the polling location, as well as with the *Texas Election Code* (including, without limitation, Sections [61.003](#) , [85.001](#) , and [85.036](#)).
3. A faculty member, staff member, or student employee may work for a political campaign, including electioneering; however, as discussed above no faculty member, staff member, or student employee may do so during any period that individual is being paid to perform duties for UTRGV, and no UTRGV equipment, supplies, or other resources may be used to conduct such electioneering activities.
4. Candidates and their representatives are allowed beyond the designated electioneering areas for electioneering if accompanied by a recognized student organization, faculty organization, or staff organization that has complied with all UTRGV policies for bringing guest speakers to campus.
5. Candidates or their campaign staff may install signs in locations expressly designated and approved by election officials and by UTRGV. Signs may be placed no earlier than 48 hours before the first day of an early voting period and must be removed within 48 hours of the closing of the regular voting period (or Election Day). Otherwise, candidates for public office or their campaigns are considered members of the public and may not post signs anywhere else on campus.
 - a. Signs that are less than three (3) feet tall and three (3) feet wide and use stakes driven less than 14 inches in the ground may be installed by campaign staff. The intent of this restriction is to allow traditional yard signs.
 - b. Larger signs or flags and use of stakes that are driven more than 14 inches into the ground are prohibited. Signs violating these size limitations will be removed at the candidate's or campaign's expense.
 - c. Signs must otherwise comply with [UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 02-300](#) Speech, Expression and Assembly (including its appendices).
6. Candidates or their campaign staff may set up one table per campaign in locations expressly designated and approved by election officials and UTRGV during hours the polling location is open. A table must not be longer than 8 feet and have a sign or literature that identifies the candidate sponsoring the table. Otherwise, candidates for public office or their campaigns are considered members of the public and may not set up tables anywhere else on campus.
7. Candidates or their campaign staff may erect one pop-up canopy tent per campaign (with a 12'x12' maximum footprint), which may be campaign-branded or must otherwise identify the candidate sponsoring the canopy, in locations expressly designated and approved by election officials and UTRGV during hours

the polling location is open. Canopy tents must be placed in a manner that does not, in the judgment of UTRGV, obstruct the view of a driver or user of a personal-transportation riding device (e.g., a minimum of ten (10) feet from a sidewalk, road, or driveway curb, whichever is furthest). Canopy tents must be secured to the ground using stakes inserted no more than 14 inches into the ground at each supporting pole, or by the appropriate weights at the foot of each supporting pole. Otherwise, candidates for public office or their campaigns are considered members of the public and may not set up any sort of tent or exhibit anywhere else on campus.

8. Candidates or their campaigns are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Governmental Relations with electioneering-related questions.

ACTIVITIES BY REGISTERED STUDENT, FACULTY, OR STAFF ORGANIZATIONS

1. Consistent with Texas law, registered student organizations, faculty organizations, or staff organizations that receive state funds from any source may not request others to vote for or against a candidate or a proposition on a ballot for public election. Registered student organizations, faculty organizations, or staff organizations that accept state resources or services such as furnishings, computer equipment, or campus services (e.g., printing, event assistance, security) are considered to have received state funds. (See [Section 2.24 of Rule 80103, Regents' Rules](#).)
2. A registered student organization, faculty organization, or staff organization that does not receive state funds from any source may request others to vote for or against a candidate or proposition on a ballot for public election, subject to the time, place, and manner restrictions found in [UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 02-300](#) Speech, Expression, and Assembly (including its appendices). Individual faculty or staff members or student employees, however, may not conduct those activities during any period the individual is being paid to perform duties for UTRGV. (See [Section 2.24 of Rule 80103, Regents' Rules](#).)
3. If a registered student organization, faculty organization, staff organization, or an individual student, faculty member, or staff member makes a request for someone to support or vote for or against a candidate for an elective position or office, or for or against a proposition on a ballot for a public election, such organizations or individuals are subject to the following:
 - a. They must conduct such activities in compliance with [Rule 80103 of the Regents' Rules](#) regarding solicitation;
 - b. They must abide by any time, place, and manner rules established by UTRGV;
 - c. They must abide by the provisions of federal, state, or local laws governing the election;
 - d. They may not use any equipment, supplies, or services of UTRGV;
 - e. They may not engage in such activities during any period that they are being paid to perform duties for UTRGV; and

- f. They may not engage in such activities if their organization receives state funds from any source.
(See [Section 2.24 of Rule 80103, Regents' Rules.](#))

DESIGNATED PUBLIC FORUMS

As authorized under [Senate Bill 2972](#), specific areas of UTRGV's campuses have been designated as open to members of the public – including candidates for public office or their campaigns – to engage in expressive activities. These **designated public forums** are identified in [Appendix I of UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly](#). Expressive activities in **designated public forums** are subject to the time, manner, place rules of [UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly](#) (including its appendices). For members of the public, the rules are summarized below:

1. **Distribution of Literature** - Members of the public may distribute literature in **designated public forums** but may not sell it on campus. Literature includes typical leaflets or flyers that are distributed by candidates for public office. Any literature distributed must comply with [UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly](#) (including [Appendix A](#) and other appendices) and [Rule 80103 of the Regents' Rules](#).
2. **Signs & Banners** - Members of the public may display a hand-held sign or hand-held banner without poles in **designated public forums** by holding or carrying it by hand or otherwise attaching it to their person. No advance permission is required. Signs or banners on sticks or poles or otherwise attached to any device are prohibited. All signs and banners must comply with UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly (including [Appendix B](#) and other appendices) and [Rule 80103 of the Regents' Rules](#).
3. **Chalking** – Members of the public are not permitted to chalk sidewalks, even if those sidewalks are included as part of a **designated public forum**. Only UTRGV-affiliated individuals or institutions are permitted to chalk sidewalks using water-soluble chalk, and chalking must comply with UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly (including [Appendix C](#) and other appendices) and [Rule 80103 of the Regents' Rules](#).
4. **Tables** - Members of the public are not permitted to set up tables in the **designated public forums**. (See [Appendix D](#), UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly.)
5. **Exhibits** - Members of the public may not erect exhibits in the **designated public forums**. (See [Appendix E](#), UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly.)
6. **Amplified Sound** - With advance permission, members of the public may use amplified sound in the **designated public forums**; however, during a voting period for an election held at UTRGV under the *Texas Elections Code*, amplified sound within 1,000 feet of a campus building in which a polling place is located is prohibited if the amplified sound is for the purpose of making a political speech or for electioneering for or against any candidate, measure, or political party. (See [Appendix F](#), UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly.)

7. Guest Speakers - Members of the public may not present guest speakers in the **designated public forums**. (See [Appendix G](#), UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly.)
8. Public Assemblies – Members of the public may publicly assemble in the **designated public forums**. If attendance of more than 25 participants (including potential counter-demonstrators) is expected, a candidate or their campaign is encouraged to provide advance notice of no less than ten (10) business days to the Office of Governmental Relations to help UTRGV improve the safety and success of the planned activity. (See [Appendix H](#), UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly.)

TAILGATING AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY

UTRGV Athletics offers fans the opportunity to tailgate before football and baseball games, and UTRGV Athletics has developed tailgating policies to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for tailgating, to promote the safety and security of individuals associated with game-day activities, and to safeguard and preserve property under the management of UTRGV. Consistent with these policies:

1. Signs, banners, flags, wraps, tents, canopies, or similar items regarding political candidates or issues may not be displayed in tailgate areas.
2. Electioneering is not permitted in tailgate areas, since tailgate areas on UTRGV property are part of UTRGV's **limited public forum**.

USE OF UTRGV'S NAME, LOGOS, OR TRADEMARKS, OR FILMING ON CAMPUS

UTRGV's name, logos, and trademarks are state resources. The use of UTRGV's name, logos, or trademarks in any political advertisement (whether on film, printed, or in social-media posts); sign, banner, flag, wrap, tent, canopy or similar item; or for another political purpose (e.g., an invitation to a political event) is prohibited, regardless of whether the use occurs on a UTRGV campus. Photography or filming for purposes of a political advertisement may not occur on a UTRGV campus.

DEFINITIONS

1. Amplified sound - refers to sound whose volume is increased by any electric, electronic, mechanical, or motor-powered means. Shouting, group chants, and the playing of acoustic musical instruments are not considered amplified sound.
2. Banner – means an affixed, stationary sign hung from a structure, or between two buildings, structures, poles, or columns.
3. Common outdoor area – refers to outdoor space of UTRGV property that is not used on either a temporary or permanent basis for dedicated UTRGV business or events, an educational function, or a research function. The term also does not include outdoor surfaces of UTRGV buildings, surfaces associated with or connected to UTRGV buildings, UTRGV structures, spaces dedicated to temporary outdoor banners or exhibits, or residential outdoor spaces managed by Residence Life.

4. Designated Public Forum(s) – refers to area(s) on UTRGV’s campuses designated by the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System as public forums, consistent with the First Amendment to the [United States Constitution](#) and [Section 8, Article I, Texas constitution](#). See [Appendix I](#) of UTRGV HOP Policy 02-300 Speech, Expression, and Assembly for the specific locations of UTRGV’s public forums.
5. Exhibit - means an object or collection of related objects designed to stand on the ground or on a raised surface other than a table; is designed for temporary display; and is not permanently attached to the ground.
6. Expressive Activity – has the meaning assigned in [Section 51.9315, Texas Education Code](#).
7. Feather Banner (or Feather Flag) – refers to a tall, narrow fabric flag mounted on a pole, often shaped like a feather.
8. Guest Speaker - means a speaker or performer who is not a student, faculty member, or staff member.
9. Limited Public Forum – means UTRGV property, both indoors and outdoors, and includes the common outdoor areas of campus. This does not include the outside surfaces of a UTRGV building, a UTRGV structure, spaces dedicated to temporary outdoor banners or exhibits, and residential outdoor spaces managed by Residence Life.
10. Literature – means any printed material, including any newspaper, magazine, or other publication, and any leaflet, flyer, or other informal matter, that is produced in multiple copies for distribution to potential readers.
11. Regents’ Rules – The *Rules and Regulations* of the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System.
12. Registered student, faculty, or staff organization – an organization established and currently registered under applicable UTRGV policies.
13. Room or space – includes any room or space, indoors or outdoors, owned or controlled by UTRGV.
14. Sign – refers to any method of displaying a visual message to others, except that transferring possession of a copy of a message is the distribution of literature (as defined in Appendix A of UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures [ADM 02-300: Speech, Expression and Assembly](#)) and not a sign.
15. Solicitation – the sale, lease, rental or offer for sale, lease, rental of any property, product, merchandise, publication, or service, whether for immediate or future delivery; an oral statement or the distribution or display of printed material, merchandise, or products that is designed to encourage the purchase, use or rental of any property, product, merchandise, publication, or service; the receipt of or request for any gift or contribution; or the request to support or oppose or to vote for or against a candidate, issue, or proposition appearing on the ballot at any election held pursuant to State or federal law or local ordinances.
 - a. Engaging in expressive activities as defined in [Section 51.9315\(a\)\(2\), Texas Education Code](#), in a common outdoor area of campus, does not constitute solicitation within this definition.
 - b. Words or symbols on personal apparel, or on decals or bumper stickers affixed to a vehicle by an owner of that vehicle are not solicitation within this definition.
 - c. Unadorned acknowledgments or thanks to donors are not solicitation within this definition.

RELATED RULES AND OTHER REFERENCE

Resources

State Law:

1. Chapter 556, Government Code (Political Activities by Public Entities and Individuals): <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/GV/pdf/GV.556.pdf>
2. Section 2203.004, Government Code (Requirement to Use State Property for State Purposes): <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/GV/pdf/GV.2203.pdf>
3. Section 39.02, Penal Code (Abuse of Official Capacity): <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/PE/pdf/PE.39.pdf>

Regents' Rules and Regulations:

1. Rule 30103, Section 5 (Political Activities): <https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/30103-standards-conduct>
2. Rule 40501 (Speech and Assembly): <https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/40501-speech-and-assembly>
3. Rule 80101 (Category of Facilities and Authorized Users): <https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/80101-category-facilities-and-authorized-users>
4. Rule 80103, Section 2.23 (Support of a Candidate or Proposition): <https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/80103-solicitation>
5. Rule 80104 (Use of Facilities): <https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/80104-use-facilities>
6. Rule 80105 (Joint Sponsorship of the Use of Property or Buildings): <https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/80105-joint-sponsorship-use-property-or-buildings>
7. Rule 80106 (Special Use Facilities): <https://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/80106-special-use-facilities>

The University of Texas System Memorandum

August 2026 Subject: Political Activity on Campus

<https://www.utrgv.edu/gcr/files/documents/powerpoint/chancellors-memo.pdf>

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Handbook of Operating Procedures Sections:

ADM 10-104 and ADM 02-300

[Handbook of Operating Procedures | UTRGV](#)

QUICK REFERENCE ADDENDUM...
TO THE GUIDANCE FOR ACCESS TO CAMPUS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY
(UPDATED AUGUST 2026)

Please refer to the **Guidance for Access to Campus for Political Activity and UTRGV's Handbook of Operating Procedures** for a more complete explanation of the rules, guidance, and explanations found in this addendum.

ELECTIONEERING AT POLLING LOCATIONS ... When UTRGV is hosting a polling location, a candidate for political office may electioneer in the specially designated electioneering area(s). Otherwise, candidates are considered off-campus guest speakers and generally must gain access to UTRGV's *limited public forum* through the invitation of a registered student organization, faculty organization, staff organization, or UTRGV's student government.

- Electioneering must be conducted 100 feet from a polling location in designated spaces
- Amplified sound is prohibited within 1,000 feet of a polling location

CAMPAIGN SIGNS ... Candidates may install signs in approved electioneering locations and only while UTRGV serves as a polling location. **Signs & equipment are ALLOWED as follows:**

- Signs may be placed no earlier than 48 hours before voting begins and must be removed within 48 hours of the closing of the election voting period.
- Traditional yard signs (3' x 3' max); one canopy (12' x 12' max); and one table (8' max).
- See guidance for placement requirements and additional restrictions. Signs/equipment found in violation will be removed at the candidate's expense.
 - **NOT ALLOWED:** 4' x 8' signs; feather flags; traditional flags

EXPRESSIVE ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS ... Specific areas of UTRGV's campuses have been designated as open to the public – including candidates for public office or their campaigns – to engage in expressive activities. These *designated public forums* are identified in [Appendix I of UTRGV HOP Policy ADM 02-300](#).

USE OF UTRGV'S NAME, LOGOS, OR TRADEMARKS ... UTRGV's name, logos, and trademarks are state resources, and are prohibited in any political advertisement or use, whether in film media, printed media, or in social-media posts, and also including signs, banners, flags, wraps, tents, canopies or similar items; or for another political purpose (e.g., an invitation to a political event), regardless of whether the use occurs on a UTRGV campus.

FILMING ON CAMPUS ... Photography or filming for purposes of a political advertisement may not occur on a UTRGV campus.

NO POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING AT TAILGATING EVENTS ... UTRGV Athletics offers fans the opportunity to tailgate before football & baseball games; tailgating policies prohibit signs, banners, flags, wraps, tents, canopies, or similar items regarding political candidates or issues in tailgate areas and electioneering is not permitted in tailgate areas.