

CONTACT WITH STATE/FEDERAL LEGISLATORS AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES POLICY

It is university policy that all contact with state and federal legislators and governmental agencies be coordinated through the Office of University Relations and Governmental Affairs. That office, working with the President, is responsible for engaging in meaningful dialogue and relationships with government officials and agencies at the local, state and federal levels. Also inherent in those responsibilities is the task of communicating with members of the community on how employees can ethically and legally participate in the governmental process if they choose to do so.

Bowling Green State University encourages all students, faculty and staff to exercise their rights and duties as citizens to participate as private citizens and individuals in the governmental process. Federal and state laws, however, clearly distinguish between the political activities of individuals and those of tax-exempt institutions and governmental instrumentalities such as BGSU. Therefore, it is important for all employees of BGSU to abide by all governing legal principles in making contact with legislators and governmental agencies.

Some policy guidelines follow:

Use Of University Name/Letterhead

(These guidelines apply when University employees contact state and federal officials or agencies for personal, not official University purposes.)

1. BGSU faculty/staff should not allow their own names to be used in ways that state or imply University endorsement.
2. It should be clearly understood that opinions expressed by a faculty or staff member are the opinions of the individual and not an official position of the University.
3. Use of the University letterhead, address, e-mail system or other identification that might associate the content and conclusion of the document with the University should be avoided. University/departmental letterhead and/or e-mail systems should be reserved for correspondence regarding University affairs.

Note: You may state in the body of your message what your affiliation is with BGSU (for identification purposes only) but you cannot directly state or indirectly imply that you are writing in your capacity as a BGSU employee. It should be made clear you are expressing your view as a private citizen.

Political Action/Governmental Appearances

1. The University's relationship with federal, state and local governments may necessitate that BGSU take an institutional position regarding legislative or executive action. The purpose of such a position is to communicate to government officials the effects that a particular law, rule or regulation may have on the mission of the University. The President has the authority to determine when such an institutional position will be taken and the form, content and timing of its release. The Office of University Relations and Governmental Affairs co-ordinates these activities and is the clearinghouse for requests that BGSU take an institutional position on any governmental action.
2. The aforementioned points on use of the University name, letterhead and e-mail apply specifically to

political activities (including lobbying efforts to influence legislation or regulations) by any member of the BGSU community, except in connection with an institutional position taken by the University.

3. All University employees appearing before Congress or the Ohio General Assembly, or their agencies, committees or members, to offer testimony, opinions or commentary regarding existing or potential laws, rules or regulations, not expressly authorized by the Office of University Relations and Governmental Affairs, of the Sponsored Programs and Research Office (SPAR) on all matters relating to research, must clearly state in advance that they are appearing in their individual capacities and that their testimony, opinions and commentary are not authorized by, and must not be construed as, reflecting on the position of the University.
4. The Office of University Relations and Governmental Affairs does not lobby federal agencies but is the entity notifying our congressional representatives of specific University proposals and positions that should be supported at that level to further the University's mission.

Bill Tracking

1. Those interested in tracking various pieces of proposed legislation that would affect particular offices or academic areas should contact the Office of University Relations and Governmental Affairs for assistance.

Summary

1. There are restrictions placed on University employees by the federal and state governments, but following the above guidelines should ensure that problems are avoided.
2. The above information is not an all-inclusive. Other questions about any aspects of involvement in the governmental process should be brought to the attention of the Office of University Relations and Governmental Affairs.

There is no additional information on the Contact with State/Federal Legislators and Governmental Agencies Policy in either employee handbook or the Charter's Faculty Handbook although the policy applies to all employees. This information was distributed by written memorandum to all in January, 2005.