

Avoid Talking Politics in the Office

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This year's presidential election has captured the public's attention like no other campaign in recent history. And, even though the campaign may be headed into the home stretch, there's still plenty of time left to talk politics. With so much interest in the campaign and so many undecided voters, heated political discussions are everywhere. In the workplace, the overtones of race, gender and age that frame the historic 2008 political season give new meaning to the term "office politics."

The key to designing effective policies is to focus on how opinions are expressed and not the nature of the opinions. Politics can invoke passion. If rules focus on actions, employees will be less likely to take personal offense to them. Employers do themselves more harm than good, however, with policies that govern political expression unless they make certain the same rules apply to everyone and are consistently enforced.

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