



Ohio Revised Code

Section 9.03 Newsletters of political subdivisions.

Effective: April 6, 2023

Legislation: House Bill 281

(A) As used in this section:

(1) "Political subdivision" means any body corporate and politic, except a municipal corporation that has adopted a charter under Section 7 of Article XVIII, Ohio Constitution, and except a county that has adopted a charter under Sections 3 and 4 of Article X, Ohio Constitution, to which both of the following apply:

(a) It is responsible for governmental activities only in a geographic area smaller than the state.

(b) It is subject to the sovereign immunity of the state.

(2) "Cigarettes" and "tobacco product" have the same meanings as in section 5743.01 of the Revised Code.

(3) "Transaction" has the same meaning as in section 1315.51 of the Revised Code.

(4) "Campaign committee," "campaign fund," "candidate," "legislative campaign fund," "political action committee," "political committee," "political party," and "separate segregated fund" have the same meanings as in section 3517.01 of the Revised Code.

(B) Except as otherwise provided in division (C) of this section, the governing body of a political subdivision may use public funds to publish and distribute newsletters, or to use any other means, to communicate information about the plans, policies, and operations of the political subdivision to members of the public within the political subdivision and to other persons who may be affected by the political subdivision.

(C) Except as otherwise provided in division (A)(7) of section 340.03 of the Revised Code, no governing body of a political subdivision shall use public funds to do any of the following:



(1) Publish, distribute, or otherwise communicate information that does any of the following:

(a) Contains defamatory, libelous, or obscene matter;

(b) Promotes alcoholic beverages, cigarettes or other tobacco products, or any illegal product, service, or activity;

(c) Promotes illegal discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, or ancestry;

(d) Supports or opposes any labor organization or any action by, on behalf of, or against any labor organization;

(e) Supports or opposes the nomination or election of a candidate for public office, the investigation, prosecution, or recall of a public official, or the passage of a levy or bond issue.

(2) Compensate any employee of the political subdivision for time spent on any activity to influence the outcome of an election for any of the purposes described in division (C)(1)(e) of this section. Division (C)(2) of this section does not prohibit the use of public funds to compensate an employee of a political subdivision for attending a public meeting to present information about the political subdivision's finances, activities, and governmental actions in a manner that is not designed to influence the outcome of an election or the passage of a levy or bond issue, even though the election, levy, or bond issue is discussed or debated at the meeting.

(D) Except as otherwise provided in division (A)(7) of section 340.03 of the Revised Code or in division (E) of this section, no person shall knowingly conduct a direct or indirect transaction of public funds to the benefit of any of the following:

(1) A campaign committee;

(2) A political action committee;



(3) A legislative campaign fund;

(4) A political party;

(5) A campaign fund;

(6) A political committee;

(7) A separate segregated fund;

(8) A candidate.

(E) Division (D) of this section does not prohibit the utilization of any person's own time to speak in support of or in opposition to any candidate, recall, referendum, levy, or bond issue unless prohibited by any other section of the Revised Code.

(F) Nothing in this section prohibits or restricts any political subdivision from sponsoring, participating in, or doing any of the following:

(1) Charitable or public service advertising that is not commercial in nature;

(2) Advertising of exhibitions, performances, programs, products, or services that are provided by employees of a political subdivision or are provided at or through premises owned or operated by a political subdivision;

(3) Licensing an interest in a name or mark that is owned or controlled by the political subdivision.

(G) Whoever violates division (D) of this section shall be punished as provided in section 3599.40 of the Revised Code.