

Political Land Mines.

We are all very painfully aware that we are in the heat of a national election season. So is the IRS. The IRS is looking very hard at non profits to make sure that no public charities are endorsing candidates which they categorize as political activity.

PTA does not permit the use of your title even for information purposes. We do hold our officers to a higher standard than federal law. We have this standard because we know our members are a very visible and knowledgeable voice for education. We are seen in our community and throughout the state as the voice for education that is not influenced by special interests or political pressures. We are seen as a voice that is above the political fray. We all need to protect this very important image.

Please be careful when you are personally supporting candidates for office. Do not wear PTA pins, shirts or any other identifying items when working with candidates in public that could be mistaken for an endorsement by PTA.

If you are a high profile PTA leader in your area, please consider the impression you are giving. Is there any way someone, even the opposition could confuse you as the PTA as endorsing the candidate?

We are not trying to limit your freedom of speech and we do know that you are very qualified to know who would be the best choice for political leaders in your community.

The IRS is required to audit every public charity that has had a complaint claiming that they have engaged in political activity. Remember that any political activity is forbidden by IRC 501(C)(3). If the resulting audit reveals, based on the totality of the facts and circumstances, if any political activity has occurred, the public charity will lose its tax exempt status and face significant tax ramifications as a result. This is extremely important for PTA because we are all connected by our group exemption.

The status of your Unit, Council or District does depend on your personal actions. You are PTA leaders; we need you to follow the spirit of the law, not just the letter of the law. Remember, we are all judged on our perceived actions. So we all need to act in a manner that is beyond reproach.

Honor your commitment to PTA . Honor your commitment to kids

Doug Pickford

Treasurer, California State PTA