



## **Non-Partisan Policy**

### **STATEMENT ADOPTED**

Hill Country Community Ministries has elected to be a non-partisan body and our mission is Driven by Grace Through Faith, Hill Country Community Ministries coordinates local involvement, providing essential goods and services to families in need or those facing a crisis. With compassion and care, we affirm dignity through the provision of food, clothing, and advocacy for our community while being good stewards of the resources entrusted to us. Our goal is to break the grip of hardship, hunger and hopelessness by improving health and well-being of our neighbors. To be nonpartisan means to not support or oppose candidates for public office in any election, to not take a stand for or against a political party and to not advocate action on public policy positions for the benefit of any candidate or political party. The right to vote is a powerful freedom, and participation in free and fair elections is essential for a democratic society. As a nonpartisan, trusted messenger, Hill Country Community Ministries can play a vital role in promoting voter and civic participation.

### **What non-partisan guidelines should Hill Country Community Ministries follow?**

Hill Country Community Ministries as an organization, staff and volunteers should be nonpartisan when working for or representing the organization.

Hill Country Community Ministries members acting in official capacity and sponsored events, may not:

- Endorse or oppose a candidate running for public office.
- Make a campaign contribution to or expenditure for or against a candidate.
- Rate candidates on who is most favorable to an issue.
- Let candidates use the organization's facilities or resources unless those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value.



- Use our resources, including email accounts, computers and phones, or sponsored events for partisan political activity.
- Display candidate materials or signs or wear partisan buttons or attire or express exuberance for or against candidate or issue statements.
- Elected officials will be treated as “candidates” after announcing and/or filing they are running for election or re-election.

Additionally, Board Members and Staff, may not:

- Hold a concurrent paid partisan position with a party, candidate or cause. Being nonpartisan does not mean non-participation.

Hill Country Community Ministries as an organization may conduct a wide range of activities to promote voter registration, education and turnout, so long as it is nonpartisan.

For example, we may,

- Conduct or Promote Voter Registration
- Educate Voters on the Voting Process
- Distribute Nonpartisan Sample Ballots, Candidate Questionnaires, or Voter Guides
- Organize Get-Out-the-Vote Activities
- Encourage and Help People to Vote
- Host or Co-Sponsor a Candidate Forum
- Educate Voters on the Issues Nonpartisan Voter Registration

Guidelines:

Staff or volunteers may not suggest what candidate to support or party to join.

Processes:

Candidates may be invited to attend a function on a nonpartisan basis.

1. In their capacity as candidate if the nonprofit:
  - Provides an equal opportunity to other candidates for the same office — such as a similar time, venue and presentation format.



- Does not indicate support for or opposition to the candidate. State this when the candidate is introduced and in communications about the appearance.
- No political fundraising occurs.
- 2. In their capacity as a public figure, such as an elected official or expert in their field:
  - If the candidate is chosen to speak solely for reasons other than their candidacy and speaks only in a non-candidate capacity, and,
  - If there is no mention of their candidacy during the presentation and the atmosphere is nonpartisan and free of campaign activity.
- 3. On the candidate's own initiative:
  - Candidates are free to attend public events sponsored by a nonprofit. In such a case,
    - Take care that there is no actual or implied endorsement.
    - Don't give the candidate a chance to address the gathering.

Q. Can I use my personal account to support candidates?

Individuals have a right to express preferences for or against candidates. This applies to their personal social media accounts. The exception would be if that account is primarily used by the individual or others as a communication vehicle for the nonprofit.

Q. What about the Executive Director or CEO?

The chief executive officer of the nonprofit has the same rights of free expression as any other staff member, when not officially representing the organization. However, to the extent they are seen by stakeholders and constituents as representing the nonprofit, a CEO should exercise more restraint in what they say on the internet both to avoid any appearance of partisanship and how it could impact their nonprofit.

Q. What are guidelines for tagging, sharing or retweeting?

Don't use organizational accounts to tag, re-tweet, share posts, or engage with political campaigns or partisan organizations that have endorsed candidates.



Q. How about sharing content posted by a 501(c)(6) advocacy organizations or other non-campaign organization whose primary purpose is other than electing candidates?

You may share content if the content shared is educational in nature and clearly nonpartisan.

Q. Is my nonprofit responsible for how our posts are shared?

No. You cannot be responsible for who a person or organization shares your post with.

Q. What about content posted by other users to our social media platforms?

It helps to make a general disclaimer on your social media site that you're not responsible for opinions posted by people not under your employ. You can't control what other people post to your Facebook wall or tweet at you. It's good to have a policy for deleting partisan content or other types of posts (like unauthorized commercial activity).