

Opinion on Political Congratulatory Messages
Ed Norris, PCinC - National Counselor
Opinion No. 2, 2022-2023
November 10, 2022

Commander-in-Chief Bruce D. Frail requested an Opinion regarding the potential for political endorsement. A Brother of a Camp was elected to political office and the Camp wanted to publicly congratulate him.

While congratulating a Brother for winning a political office may seem harmless, that message could be used at a later date as an endorsement from the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The documents research clearly demonstrate that the Order remain non-partisan. Our Charter states that we cannot aide a candidate for public office. Commander-in-Chief Brian C. Pierson's General Order #14, Series 2020-2021 further expanded upon the rules in our Charter, Constitution, and Regulations.

It is the opinion of the National Counselor that the Commander-in-Chief, using the authority granted him by the Charter, Constitution, and Regulations will not allow a Brother, representing the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War or Sons of Veterans Reserve, a Camp, a Department, or a Military Unit or District to congratulate any Brother who is running or has been elected to a political office. The Commander-in-Chief should issue a General Order to reflect this opinion.

Research

The following were reviewed to determine the validity of this opinion:

- Charter, Constitution, and Regulations (updated as of August 2022)
- National Digest (updated as of August 2004)
- General Order #14, Series 2020-2021 (13 April 2021)

Charter, Constitution, and Regulations; Charter, Section 200307, Page 21

“(b) Political activities. The corporation or an officer or agent as such may not contribute to, support, or assist a political party or candidate for public office.”

Charter, Constitution, and Regulations; Constitution, Article IV, Page 24

“The Order being strictly non-sectarian and non-partisan, the introduction or discussion of sectarian or partisan topics is strictly prohibited.”

Charter, Constitution, and Regulations; Regulations, Chapter V, Article VXI, Page 156

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National Digest; Page 66 of 77

“Broadly and educationally speaking discussion of political or religious subjects are permissible where free from partisan or sectarian bias. The law controlling is inflexible that the Order is strictly non-political and non-religious. NC Courtney, Op III, 49th, 43.”

Commander-in-Chief Brian C. Pierson’s General Order #14, Series 2020-2021.

“6. Restrictions and Prohibitions. Lobbying shall remain nonpartisan. It is prohibited to conduct or engage in political campaign activities to intervene in elections to public office. The Johnson Amendment to the 1954 Tax Code applies to all 501(c)(3) organizations, not just religious 501(c)(3) organizations. This includes, but is not limited to the following restrictions:

- a. At no time will any Department, Camp, or SVR subordinate unit of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, contribute or otherwise donate funds to any political campaign;
- b. At no time will any Department, Camp, or SVR subordinate unit raise funds for candidates in any manner;
- c. At no time will any Department, Camp, or SVR subordinate unit publicly support or oppose any candidates;
- d. At no time will the National, Departments, Camps, or SVR subordinate units post partisan political messages on any social media platform (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Reddit, Imgur, Gab, etc.) or on organizational websites;
- e. At no time will the National, Departments, Camps or SVR subordinate units engage in ad hominem criticism of public officials, or give the appearance thereof (including but not limited to attacks on one’s personal characteristics or one’s status or qualifications);
- f. At no time will the National, Departments, Camps or SVR subordinate units connect, compare, or assess the organization’s position on an issue(s) with voting recommendations for or against candidates for office in any election(s). This prohibition includes but is not limited to making and/or distributing voter guides for or against candidates;
- g. At no time will the National, Departments, Camps, or SVR subordinate units, during an election, compare the organization’s issue position with that of a candidate.”