

# **Policy on Placement of Political Signs on County Property**

**and**

## **Campaigning in Rutherford County Offices**

### **A. Campaigning in Rutherford County Offices**

- (1) Those seeking public office are welcome to visit Rutherford County Offices and introduce themselves to County employees and our guests so long as their visit is not disruptive to County operations or hinders the ability of the public to access services. Candidates may wear political advertisements on their clothing that identifies them and the office they are seeking, but no political material (such as cards, flyers, etc.) are to be distributed on county owned or controlled property except as permitted at voting locations as specified below.
- (2) The County wishes to ensure as many members of the public have the ability to park their vehicle at each polling location as possible. In furtherance of this policy, those seeking public office and their supporters are permitted to stand in County owned or controlled parking lots but must remain beyond the statutorily required buffer zones during early or election day voting and they must not impede the flow of traffic or parking.
- (3) Pop-up tents or similar erected structures are not permitted on any County owned or controlled parking lot.
- (4) As the Rutherford County Administrative Office Building located at 289 North Main Street in Rutherfordton (the “CAB”) is used by staff and visitors conducting County business, political candidates and their supporters are encouraged, but not required, to park at a location other than the CAB parking lot.
- (5) At the Rutherford County Government Services Center located at 145 College Avenue (the “GSC”), housing multiple County offices serving citizens and visitors in addition to those wishing to vote, political candidates and their supporters shall be required to park their vehicles at designated parking spots on the north side of the parking lot.

### **B. Placement of Political Signs on County Property**

Rutherford County supports the rights of free speech of its employees, its citizens and of the general public. However, in the interests of having County offices and workplaces free from distraction, harassment, and disruption, and to prevent the appearance of support or opposition to any political candidate or issue in an environment where such support or opposition may be inappropriate, no Political Signs are permitted within or without any building or facility used for

County purposes nor upon any real property owned or leased by Rutherford County (herein “County Property”) except as specifically set forth herein:

(1) “Political Sign” means any sign, flyer, handbill, advertisement (including electronic) that is intended for public display in any manner and that advocates for political action, including but not limited to any endorsement of either support or opposition for any issue or for a candidate for political office.

(2) Any Political Sign otherwise in compliance with this Policy may be placed only in the following locations on County Property:

- (a) At the CAB, ONLY in the planter and the grass near the sign for the CAB located between the parking lot and sidewalk on the west side of North Main Street.
- (b) At any Convenience Center location outside the fence between such fence and any adjacent right of way of public or private road, as relevant. No Political Sign shall be placed upon or attached to any fence at any Convenience Center nor within such fence.
- (c) At the GSC, housing the Board of Elections, ONLY in one or the other of the following locations for a maximum of one (1) sign at GSC:
  - (i) In the grass area outside DOT or municipal setbacks on the western side of the entrance driveway from Main Street.
  - (ii) In the grass median on the south side of the entrance driveway from College Avenue. Any Political Sign placed at this location must be in conformity with the requirements of this Policy set forth herein, with the policies of North Carolina Department of Transportation, and with N.C. Gen. Stat. §136-32(d), including the following: No Political Sign shall: (A) be closer than four feet (4') to the edge of the pavement of any road or drive; (B) be higher than 42 inches above the edge of the pavement of the road; (C) be larger than 864 square inches; (D) be more than 36 inches in either width or height; (E) obscure or replace another sign nor obscure motorist visibility.
- (d) At any County Property at which voting occurs, either as a voting place for a precinct pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §163-128 or for early voting.

Political Signs placed on any County Property must be placed outside any relevant Buffer Zone pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §163-166.4 and shall be limited to any grassy or unpaved location of the relevant County Property that is located within four (4) feet of the right of way of public road. No Political Sign on any County Property shall be placed upon any tree or upon any structure, including, but not limited to, any fence, sign, or building.

(3) Political Signs on County Property must observe the following specifications:

- (a) No more than one Political Sign for any issue or candidate shall be placed on the same tract of County Property except for the GSC, where no more than one Political Sign for any issue or candidate shall be placed at each of the two (2) designated locations.

- (b) No Political Sign shall be larger than three (36) inches in width by thirty-six (36) inches in height.
- (c) No Political Sign shall obscure motorist visibility within any public vehicular area, nor at any intersection with driveway, private road or public road.
- (d) Political Signs may be placed on County Property no sooner than thirty (30) days prior to the Election Day for which they were made and must be removed from County Property no later than seven (7) days after that Election Day for which they were made. These dates are not based on any period of early voting, which shall have no effect on this policy.
- (e) Any Political Signs must follow the laws of the State of North Carolina regarding any public right of way.
- (f) No Political Sign shall obscure or replace another Political Sign.
- (g) Any Political Sign in violation of any part of this Policy will be removed and held by the County for seven (7) days for the owner of said Political Sign to pickup, after which time any such Political Signs will be appropriately recycled or otherwise disposed of by the County.

(4) In the event that the County Property is located in any municipality, any such Political Sign shall comply with any relevant municipal ordinance.

This policy shall be subject to any and all applicable state and federal laws.