

# Employer-Sponsored Meetings or Communication Regarding Political or Religious Matters

Pursuant to Washington law, an employer may not subject or threaten to subject any employee to discipline or discharge, or otherwise penalize or take any adverse employment action against an employee:

- (a) On account of the employee's refusal to:
  - (i) Attend or participate in an employer-sponsored meeting with the employer or its agent, representative, or designee, the primary purpose of which is to communicate the employer's opinion concerning religious or political matters; or
  - (ii) Listen to speech or view communications, including electronic communications, the primary purpose of which is to communicate the employer's opinion concerning religious or political matters; or
- (b) As a means of requiring an employee to attend a meeting or participate in communications described in (a); or
- (c) Because the employee, or a person acting on behalf of the employee, makes a good faith report, orally or in writing, of a violation or a suspected violation of this law.

"Political matters" means matters relating to elections for political office, political parties, proposals to change legislation, proposals to change regulations, and the decision to join or support any political party or political, civic, community, fraternal, or labor association or organization.

"Religious matters" means matters relating to religious affiliation and practice, and the decision to join or support any religious organization or association.

An aggrieved employee may bring a civil action in superior court to enforce this section no later than 90 days after the date of the alleged violation. The court may award a prevailing employee all appropriate relief, including injunctive relief, reinstatement to the employee's former position or an equivalent position, back pay and reestablishment of any employee benefits, including seniority, to which the employee would otherwise have been eligible if the violation had not occurred, and any other appropriate relief as considered necessary by the court.

This law does not:

- (a) Prohibit an employer or its agent, representative, or designee from communicating to its employees any information that the employer is required by law to communicate, but only to the extent of the legal requirement;
- (b) Limit the rights of an employer to offer meetings, forums, or other communications about religious or political matters for which attendance or participation is strictly voluntary;
- (c) Limit the rights of an employer or its agent, representative, or designee from communicating to its employees any information, or requiring employee attendance at a meeting or other event, that is necessary for the employees to perform their lawfully required job duties; or
- (d) Prohibit an employer or its agent, representative, or designee from requiring its employees to attend any training intended to reduce and prevent workplace harassment or discrimination.

This law does not apply to a religious corporation, entity, association, educational institution, or society that is exempt from the requirements of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 pursuant to 42 U.S.C. Sec. 2000e-1(a), with respect to speech on religious matters to employees who perform work connected with the activities undertaken by such religious corporation, entity, association, educational institution, or society.