

DRAFT

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

PUBLIC ACCESS and POLITICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

POLICY NO. 26-_____

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all members of the public have safe, unobstructive, and impartial access to County facilities while preserving the orderly conduct of County business. This policy applies equally to all signature gathering, solicitation, advocacy, and campaign activities.

This policy applies to all Yellowstone County facilities including the John V. Ostlund Administrative Building, the Yellowstone County Courthouse, Metra Park, including the Yellowstone County Election Office located at Metra Park, Youth Services, The Yellowstone County Sheriff Office and the Yellowstone County Detention Center.

NOTE: During election cycles, the Yellowstone County Election Office follows state election law concerning political active at polling locations and at the Election Office.

POLICY

County facilities exist primarily to provide government services to the public. Individuals conducting County business shall be able to enter, exit, and use County facilities without interference, harassment, intimidation, or unwanted solicitation.

Individuals, groups or organizations seeking signatures for petitions, initiatives, candidates, or other political or advocacy purposes must check in with the County Commissioner's Office prior to any such activities. The office is in the John V. Ostlund County Administration Building, 2825 3rd. Avenue North, Room 419.

Individuals, groups or organizations may conduct activities in areas designated by the County. Maps of County facilities with designated areas per location, are available at the County Commissioners Office.

Unless specifically authorized by the County, signature gathering, campaigning, solicitation, or distribution of literature is prohibited:

1. Inside any County owned facility
2. Within building entrances, exits, vestibules, hallways, waiting areas, or service counters.
3. In any location that obstructs pedestrian or vehicle traffic or interferes with access to County services.
4. By approaching, following, stopping, or otherwise engaging individuals who are entering or leaving County buildings.

Individuals entering or leaving County facilities must be free to decline contact without further solicitation.

While engaged in political activity at designated areas, the designated areas shall:

1. Remain clear and unobstructed access to all entrances, exits, sidewalks, parking areas and accessible routes.
2. Political activity shall not interfere with emergency access or public safety
3. Be administered in a viewpoint -neutral manner.

Regardless of location on County property. The following conduct is prohibited:

1. Blocking or impeding access to County facilities.
2. Interfering with County operations or the conduct of public business.
3. Harassing, intimidating or threatening members of the public or County employees.
4. Refusing to comply with lawful directions issued by authorized County personnel regarding safety, access, or facility operations.

ENFORCEMENT:

Individuals who refuse to comply with this policy may be directed to leave designated areas. Continued refusal to comply may result in removal from County property or other action authorized by law.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit constitutionally protected speech beyond reasonable, content-neutral time, place and manner restrictions permitted under applicable federal and Montana law.

