

Campaigning-in-Residence-Halls Policy FAQs

1. Is a campaigning-in-residence-halls (“CRH”) policy required?

Yes. Under longstanding state law, every UW institution is required to “establish policies and procedures **assuring** that political literature may be distributed and political campaigning may be conducted in state-owned residence halls consistent with the rights of residence halls students, and prescribing the time, place and manner in which these activities may be conducted.” [Wis. Admin. Code § UWS 18.11\(9\)](#) (emphasis added). See also [Wis. Stat. § 36.11\(1\)\(cm\)](#).

2. How did this policy get put in place?

The University of Wisconsin-Madison’s old CRH policy had been in place since 1988 and was due for an update, as certain provisions had become dated. Unlike other institutional policies developed under law, the law here requires that CRH policies be approved by the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Chancellor, and by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. A careful planning and stakeholder engagement process was undertaken to ensure that the policy complies with all aspects of the law and is appropriately responsive to student and other institutional interests. The approval process began in mid-2025 and was completed in early 2026. After that process was completed, University of Wisconsin-Madison reviewed and amended its housing policies in order to ensure that they harmonize well with the updated CRH policy.

3. What are the highlights of the new CRH policy?

The policy includes several key features:¹

- **Residents and their guests may campaign door-to-door** – Door-to-door campaigning by (only) residents and their invited guests is allowed.
- **Definition of “campaigning”** – Defines “campaigning” to include advocacy and education directly related to registration, candidates, or referenda in an upcoming municipal, state, or national election.
- **Tabling** – Designation of certain common area spaces and times as eligible for campaigning activities, including tabling.
- **Advance registration requirement** – Campaigning events are subject to a two-business day (i.e. not including weekends or holidays) advance registration requirement. Registration requests will not be granted if the designated tabling space has already been reserved by another party at the time of request (i.e., first come, first served). University of Wisconsin-Madison may require certain information about the registrants and the contemplated campaigning activity, but shall not on the basis of viewpoint, or unreasonably otherwise, withhold approval.

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- **Prohibited activities** – The following activities are prohibited when campaigning in residence halls:
 - **Door-to-door campaigning by non-residents/guests** – Door-to-door campaigning and other entry into residence hall living areas (except as may be needed to use the restroom) by individuals engaged in campaigning, *with the exception of residents and their invited guests, as noted above.*
 - **Literature under doors** – Placement of political literature on or under residents’ room doors.
 - **Certain literature posting** – Posting literature outside of the designated tabling area or during the time of the event, except to the extent that the posting would be allowed by student housing posting policy.
 - **Obstruction** – Obstruction of ingress/egress into or within a residence hall or interference with normal housing operations.
 - **Amplified sound** – Use of amplified sound.

4. Why are residents and their guests able to go door-to-door and campaign within their residence halls?

The CRH policy limits most campaigning activities in residence halls—and **all** such activities by non-residents/personal guests of residents—only to the designated common places and times. However, some activities by residents and their personal guests is protected on residential floors—including door-to-door campaigning. These allowances are necessary to ensure compliance with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution (First Amendment).

Under the First Amendment, some types of speech (such as commercial solicitation) are entitled to less constitutional protection than others, but political speech is entitled to the greatest protection. Thus, in every circumstance in which a resident of a residence hall (or a personal guest that the resident is allowed to bring in) is allowed under the baseline student housing rules to go and talk to other students about the weather, the Packers, Taylor Swift, Biology 101, art club, what’s for dinner in the dining hall, or essentially anything else, they are also allowed to go and talk about politics. While student housing rules can restrict what residents can do (and, even more so, what their guests can do) on their floors in many ways, they can’t say “You can talk about X, Y, or Z, but you can’t talk about politics,” because that would violate the First Amendment.

5. What should residents and their guests be mindful of regarding door-to-door campaigning within their residence halls?

Close to an election, residents might essentially experience door-to-door campaigning on their residence hall floors by their floor-mates and their floor-mates’ invited guests. They should be advised that such campaigning, by itself, is allowed. That said, the same rules and limits that govern the conduct of residents and their guests generally apply in these interactions as well, and residents should be reminded that they are responsible for the conduct of their guests. Violations of Wisconsin Administrative Code, University and residence hall rules, and housing contracts will be dealt with appropriately. As always, we expect mutual respect in all resident and guest interactions.