

Employer-Sponsored Meetings or Communication Regarding Political or Religious Matters

Pursuant to Oregon Statute, 659.785, an employer or the employer's agent, representative or designee may not discharge, discipline or otherwise penalize or threaten to discharge, discipline or otherwise penalize or take any adverse employment action against an employee:

- (a) Because the employee declines to attend or participate in an employer-sponsored meeting or communication with the employer or the agent, representative or designee of the employer if the primary purpose of the meeting or communication is to communicate the opinion of the employer about religious or political matters;
- (b) As a means of requiring an employee to attend a meeting or participate in communications described in paragraph (a) above; 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 section. This paragraph does not apply if the employee knows that the report is false.

“Political matters” includes activity related to political party affiliation, campaigns for measures, or candidates for political office and the decision to join, not join, support or not support any lawful political or constituent group. “Religious matters” includes activity related to religious affiliation or the decision to join, not join, support or not support a bona fide religious organization.

An aggrieved employee may bring a civil action to enforce this section no later than 90 days after the date of the alleged violation in the circuit court of the judicial district where the violation is alleged to have occurred or where the principal office of the employer is located. The court may award a prevailing employee all appropriate relief, including injunctive relief, rehiring or reinstatement of the employee 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 deemed necessary by the court to make the employee whole. The court will award a prevailing employee treble damages, together with reasonable attorney fees and costs.

This section does not:

- (a) Limit an employee's right to bring a common law cause of action against an employer for wrongful termination;
- (b) Diminish or impair the rights of a person under a collective bargaining agreement;
- (c) Prohibit a religious organization from requiring its employees to attend an employer-sponsored meeting or participate in any communication with the employer or the employer's agent, representative or designee for the primary purpose of communicating the employer's religious beliefs, practices or tenets;
- (d) Prohibit a political organization, including a political party or other organization that engages, in substantial part, in political matters, from requiring the political organization's employees to attend an employer-sponsored meeting or participate in any communication with the employer or the employer's agent, representative or designee for the primary purpose of communicating the employer's political tenets or purposes;
- (e) Prohibit communications of information about religious or political matters that the employer is required by law to communicate, but only to the extent of the lawful requirement;
- (f) Prohibit mandatory meetings of an employer's executive or administrative personnel to discuss issues related to the employer's business, including those issues addressed in this section; or
- (g) 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.