

November 2019

## General Election – Registration Drive & Campaign Rules

The 12<sup>th</sup> December General election will have profound implications for UNISON members across Scotland and the whole of the UK. It is vital that every effort is made to encourage UNISON members to vote. This briefing outlines ways to do that and the legal limitations placed on branch activities during the election.

### This election matters...

The vast majority of UNISON Scotland's members work in areas which are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, even so the general election will still have a huge bearing on our working lives. With reserved issues including overall public spending levels, most economic policy, most welfare spending and employment rights it could hardly be otherwise. We can't afford to sit this out.

### Get Registered!

Branches should do everything they can to ensure members are on the electoral register. The closing date for registering and getting a vote in the general election is Nov 26<sup>th</sup> by 5pm. Registering is easy and can be done online at

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

### Never mind the weather... vote by post.

Despite the importance, a polling day in Mid December might be a bit off putting for some people. It's important to let people know that they can get a postal vote. Anyone can get a postal vote so long as they apply. Applications need to be in by Nov 26<sup>th</sup> by 5pm. Applying is easy and can be done online at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote>

### Election rules branches have to follow

The Lobbying Act (introduced by the Tory/Lib Dem coalition in 2014) means the amount of money that UNISON spends campaigning during the election is very tightly controlled. The Act places restrictions on the amount that UNISON (and other campaigning organisations) can spend on public-facing campaigning. It requires us to include staffing and other resources when calculating campaign costs.

Everything the union does that can be seen as seeking to influence how the general public votes at the election will have to be accounted for.

However, there is still a lot that we can do to highlight the importance of public services and the need for investment not austerity.

***The cost of communications with UNISON members is not counted as something we have to declare. This means that we can highlight to our members what's at stake at the election – and challenge candidates about where their parties stand on the key issues facing public services.***

***We will be producing a UNISON Scotland Manifesto in the next week.***

## Lobbying Act compliance

It's important that branches do not:

- hold public rallies or hustings (including events where UNISON would be a partner or sponsor)
- jointly brand election-related campaigns with our allies
- pay for staff time related to election campaigning
- produce any of their own materials related to the election unless paid for from union's political fund
- make any donations to political parties or any other organisation campaigning during the election campaign

The good news is:

Similarly, materials that you order that have been produced by UNISON nationally or from UNISON Scotland for engaging with UNISON members do not count.

If you have any questions about what is and is not allowed – please contact Stephen Low in the Bargaining and Campaigns team. [S.Low2@unison.co.uk](mailto:S.Low2@unison.co.uk). 0141 342 2811

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For more information please contact UNISON's Bargaining and Campaigns team on 0141 342 2811, or email [s.low2@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.low2@unison.co.uk)



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