

Resolution

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Stark County Commissioners

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Adopted September 16, 2026

**Subject A Resolution Prohibiting the Placement of Private Signs and
Unattended Displays Upon County-Owned Property at the Stark
County Board of Elections**

Commissioner Harold moved for the adoption of the following resolution which was seconded by Commissioner Smith:

WHEREAS, the Board of Stark County Commissioners owns and/or controls certain real property upon which the offices and facilities of the Stark County Board of Elections are located; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ohio law, the Board of Stark County Commissioners is responsible for providing and maintaining county buildings, offices, grounds, and facilities necessary for the proper and convenient conduct of county government; and

WHEREAS, the property occupied by the Stark County Board of Elections is maintained for the governmental purposes of administering elections, registering voters, conducting early voting and other election-related activities, and providing services to candidates, voters, political subdivisions, and the general public; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds that the placement and accumulation of privately owned signs and unattended displays upon such property can create visual clutter, interfere with mowing and grounds maintenance, complicate the orderly management and use of the property, and potentially create a visual safety hazard at a very busy intersection; and

WHEREAS, the Board further finds that County-owned grounds surrounding a governmental office dedicated to the impartial administration of elections should not serve as an advertising or display area; and

WHEREAS, the Board does not intend to regulate, favor, disfavor, endorse, or suppress any particular political, religious, ideological, commercial, or other message or viewpoint, but instead intends to establish a uniform rule governing the private physical use of this particular County-owned property for any signs and unattended displays of any kind; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has recognized that the First Amendment does not require government to make all government-owned property available for private expressive activity and has upheld content-neutral restrictions upon the placement of private signs upon public property; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to establish a clear, uniform, content-neutral, and viewpoint-neutral policy governing privately placed signs and unattended displays upon the County-owned property occupied by the Stark County Board of Elections;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Stark County Commissioners, Stark County, Ohio, that:

Section 1. Property Covered

This Resolution applies to all County-owned or County-controlled lawns, landscaped areas, parking areas, driveways, grounds, and other exterior real property comprising the premises of the Stark County Board of Elections, located at 3525 Regent Ave NE, Canton, Ohio, except any public sidewalk, public right-of-way, or other property over which the Board of Stark County Commissioners does not possess legal authority to impose this policy.

Section 2. Private Signs and Unattended Displays Prohibited

No private person, candidate, campaign committee, political action committee, political party, ballot-issue committee, organization, association, business, or other nongovernmental person or entity shall place, install, stake, affix, post, attach, erect, or leave unattended upon the property described in Section 1 any privately owned:

- sign;
- yard sign;
- campaign sign;
- poster;
- placard;
- banner;
- flag;
- advertisement;
- display; or
- other similar material or device intended to communicate a private message.

This prohibition applies **without regard to the content, subject matter, identity, affiliation, or viewpoint of the person or entity responsible for the sign or display or the message expressed thereon.**

Section 3. Governmental and Legally Required Signs

This Resolution does not prohibit:

1. signs, notices, flags, or displays required by federal, state, or local law;
2. official signs installed or authorized by Stark County or the Stark County Board of Elections for governmental purposes, including identification, voter information, election administration, traffic control, parking, security, safety, accessibility, wayfinding, construction, maintenance, or similar governmental functions;

3. temporary signs or devices used by law enforcement, emergency services, contractors, or public utilities in the performance of authorized work upon the property; or
4. any sign or display that the County is legally required to permit; or
5. any sign installed by the County informing the public of this prohibition.

Any exception under this Section shall be based upon the governmental function or legal requirement served by the sign and shall not be granted or denied based upon agreement or disagreement with a private viewpoint.

Section 4. No Regulation of Personal Expression Intended

This Resolution regulates the placement or leaving of private physical signs and unattended displays upon County property.

Nothing in this Resolution is intended to prohibit constitutionally protected speech by individuals lawfully present upon property otherwise open to the public, including speech expressed through clothing, personally held signs, literature, or oral communication, subject to applicable federal and state law and otherwise lawful and constitutionally permissible time, place, and manner restrictions.

Nothing herein shall authorize electioneering in any location or at any time where electioneering is prohibited by Ohio law.

Section 5. No Public Forum Created

The Board of Stark County Commissioners declares that the County-owned lawns, landscaped areas, parking areas, driveways, and grounds covered by this Resolution are maintained for governmental and operational purposes and are not designated or intended as a forum for the placement of private signs or unattended private displays.

To the extent any prior practice may have permitted such signs or displays, the Board hereby prospectively discontinues that practice as of the effective date of this Resolution.

Nothing in this Resolution shall be construed as creating or designating any portion of the property as a public forum for private signs or unattended displays.

Section 6. Uniform Enforcement

This Resolution shall be administered and enforced uniformly and without regard to:

- political party;
- candidate;
- campaign;
- ballot position;
- position on a public issue;
- political, religious, ideological, or commercial viewpoint;

- identity of the speaker or sponsoring organization; or
- popularity or unpopularity of any message.

County employees charged with enforcement shall have no discretion to permit a private sign because they agree with, support, approve of, or consider unobjectionable its message.

Section 7. Immediate Removal and Disposal

Any private sign or unattended display placed, installed, staked, affixed, posted, attached, erected, displayed, or left upon the property in violation of this Resolution is unauthorized and may be removed immediately and without further notice by authorized County personnel or other personnel designated by the Board.

Any sign or display so removed may be disposed of immediately following its removal. The County shall have no obligation to store, preserve, inventory, safeguard, return, or otherwise retain any unauthorized sign or display removed pursuant to this Resolution.

The placement of a private sign or unattended display upon property conspicuously posted with notice of this prohibition shall constitute acknowledgment that the item is subject to immediate removal and disposal.

Removal and disposal shall be undertaken uniformly and without regard to the content, subject matter, sponsorship, identity, affiliation, or viewpoint expressed by the sign or display.

Nothing in this Section authorizes County personnel to remove any sign or property from land not owned or controlled by Stark County.

Section 8. Notice

Prior to enforcement of this Resolution, conspicuous notices shall be posted at appropriate locations upon the affected property stating substantially as follows:

COUNTY PROPERTY

NO PRIVATE SIGNS OR UNATTENDED DISPLAYS

Unauthorized signs or displays will be removed and disposed of immediately without further notice. This prohibition applies regardless of message or viewpoint.

Prior to the effective date of this Resolution, a copy of the policy shall be provided to the Stark County Board of Elections.

The County may also provide advance notice of the policy to political parties, candidates, campaign committees, ballot-issue committees, organizations, and other persons or entities that have historically placed signs upon the affected property.

The posting of the notices required by this Section shall constitute continuing public notice that privately placed signs and unattended displays are prohibited upon the property and are subject to immediate removal and disposal.

Section 9. Severability

If any provision of this Resolution or its application to any person, circumstance, or portion of the property is determined by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such determination shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions or applications, which shall remain in full force and effect to the maximum extent permitted by law.

Section 10. Effective Date

This Resolution shall become effective upon the installation of official signage stating substantially the same notice language in Section 8 above. Any unattended signs present at that time, shall be removed but retained for 7 calendar days to give their owners reasonable time to claim them.

Upon roll call the vote resulted as follows:

Mr. Harold - **YES**

Mr. Regula - **YES**

Mr. Smith - **YES**

C-E-R-T-I-F-I-C-A-T-E

I, the undersigned Assistant Clerk of the Board of Stark County Commissioners, hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct record of the resolution adopted by the Board.



Assistant Clerk