

Political Candidate Appearances at Clemmons Islamic Center

Primary route, secondary routes, what fails, what to keep | October 10, 2026
Operating guidance under the Candidate Appearance Policy adopted by the Shura Council. Approvals under that policy come from the President.

The equal-opportunity requirement applies only when someone speaks **as a political candidate**. If the person is not there as a candidate, the requirement never engages and no opponent needs to be invited.

Throughout, "candidate" means a candidate for public office, the phrase used in the policy and by the IRS. It covers races with no party on the ballot, including judicial, school board, and municipal elections.

PRIMARY ROUTE: NON-CANDIDATE CAPACITY

The five conditions, all required

1. The individual is chosen to speak **"solely for reasons other than candidacy for public office."**
2. The individual speaks only in that non-candidate capacity.
3. Neither the individual nor anyone from Clemmons Islamic Center mentions the candidacy or the election.
4. No campaign activity occurs in connection with the appearance: no materials, no sign-up sheets, no literature table, no fundraising.
5. Clemmons Islamic Center maintains a nonpartisan atmosphere, states the capacity in which the person appears, and keeps the candidacy and the election out of its announcements.

Who qualifies

Fits the route	Does not fit
A sitting county commissioner briefing the community on a rezoning or permit matter affecting the property	A challenger holding no office, with no reason to be in the building other than the campaign
A state legislator who is a physician speaking at a health event on a medical topic	An officeholder invited to speak on a subject outside anything they hold office over, selected because of the race
A sitting official attending a groundbreaking, iftar, or open house and welcomed the way the Center welcomes any official	An officeholder given the khutbah slot or the main address at Jumu'ah during the campaign season
A longtime congregant who happens to be running, attending prayer as a worshipper and not introduced from the front	That same congregant introduced from the front, by name, during the campaign
A former officeholder speaking on their record in office	Anyone whose invitation was first discussed in a conversation about the election

The test is why the invitation exists. If the campaign is the reason, the capacity is fiction and the structure collapses on examination.

IRS worked examples

Example	Facts	IRS conclusion
Ex. 10	A historical society president customarily welcomes public officials at meetings. The lieutenant governor, running for governor, attends. The president welcomes him in the usual way and makes no reference to the candidacy or the election.	No political campaign intervention.
Ex. 11	A hospital board chairman invites a congressman running for reelection to a groundbreaking. Neither mentions the candidacy or the election. No fundraising occurs.	No political campaign intervention.
Ex. 12	A university alumni newsletter prints an item stating that an alumnus is running for mayor. The item contains no other reference to the election or the candidacy.	No political campaign intervention.
Ex. 13	At a free public concert, a symphony board chairman thanks the mayor, who is up for reelection, for his support and adds <i>"please support Mayor G in November as he has supported us."</i>	Intervention. The appearance was lawful. The closing line was the violation.

Ex. 10 and Ex. 11 are the pattern to copy. Ex. 12 means a newsletter may note that a member is running, with nothing else attached. Ex. 13 is the single sentence that undoes the whole thing.

Introduction script

Write it down, hand it to whoever holds the microphone, and do not improvise. Template:

USE "We are joined this evening by [Name], [office held]. [He or she] is here at our invitation to speak about [specific non-political subject]. Please join me in welcoming [him or her]." DO NOT SAY Anything referring to the election, the race, the ballot, November, "support," "vote," "campaign," or the person's opponent. Do not thank the person for anything connected to the campaign. Do not close with a line about the future.
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What breaks it, and what to do

- **The speaker pivots to the campaign.** Decide in advance who interrupts and how. A short, neutral redirect from the host ("let us keep to the topic this evening") is enough, and it goes in the file.
- **Campaign staff bring materials.** No literature, signage, sign-up sheets, or tables anywhere on the property. Tell the office in advance, in writing.
- **Cameras.** Decide before the event whether the campaign may film or photograph, and put the answer in the invitation. The Center controls who speaks, not how footage is used afterward.
- **The posting afterward.** A Center photo captioned in a way that reads as support converts a lawful appearance into intervention. Approve the

caption before it goes up.

- **Selective access.** Ex. 9: a minister invited one Senate candidate to address the congregation and invited no other candidate during the campaign. The IRS found intervention through selectively providing facilities. A "personal capacity" disclaimer did not help.

SECONDARY ROUTE: FACILITY RENTAL

If a campaign wants the hall rather than a speaking slot, rent it at the Center's published usual rate, paid in full, with no discount or waiver, first come first served, on terms offered equally to every candidate, and do not announce or promote it as a Center event. A free or below-cost booking is a prohibited in-kind contribution, and for a federal candidate it also runs into the corporate contribution ban at 11 CFR 114.2(b).

OTHER ROUTES, AVAILABLE BUT NOT THE DEFAULT

Route	In one line	When to reach for it
Invite all, accept declines	Identical written invitations to every candidate for the office, same day, same event, same terms. Keep the declines. One of four declining is not a violation (Ex. 8).	A political candidate asks for a speaking slot as a candidate and no other route fits.
Nonpartisan forum	Written participation criteria applied uniformly, neutral moderator, broad topics, equal time, no approval or disapproval signaled.	A contested race the community wants to hear about directly.
Separate 501(c)(4)	Separate entity, books, and governance. Political activity must not be its primary activity. Do not fund or staff it from the Center without counsel.	Sustained advocacy, not a single event.

WHAT FAILS, IN ANY ROUTE

Approach	Why
"Personal capacity" disclaimer from the minbar	Ex. 9: selectively providing facilities to one candidate is intervention regardless of the disclaimer.
Inviting the opponent to a slot they cannot take	The IRS weighs "the nature of the event to which each candidate is invited."
Bulletin, email blast, or livestream favoring one candidate	An organizational communication is direct intervention. The non-candidate route protects an appearance, not a publication.
A voter guide built so one candidate wins every line	Fails the nonpartisan test.
Leadership endorsing under the Clemmons Islamic Center name or title	A leader may endorse privately. Using the Center's name, events, or channels attributes the endorsement to Clemmons Islamic Center.

KEEP FOR FOUR YEARS

- The request and who received it
- The President's written approval and route chosen, dated before the event
- The stated reason the speaker was selected
- Every invitation sent, with send dates
- Every decline and non-response
- The introduction script as delivered
- Any announcement, bulletin, email, post, or caption
- Rentals: rate card, invoice, proof of full payment

Intent is evidence. This is a facts-and-circumstances test, so a written record showing Clemmons Islamic Center set out to get around the rule counts against it. File this as compliance planning, because that is what it is.

Sources. IRS Rev. Rul. 2007-41; IRS Fact Sheet FS-2006-17 (Examples 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13); IRS Pub. 1828; 11 CFR 110.13; 11 CFR 114.2(b); Alliance for Justice, Election Year Activities for 501(c)(4) Social Welfare Organizations. Verified October 10, 2026. The introduction script is a drafting template, not IRS language.

Status. The campaign-intervention prohibition is in force. *National Religious Broadcasters v. Bessent*, No. 26-40237, is pending in the Fifth Circuit, no ruling as of October 10, 2026. Treasury and IRS guidance for houses of worship has been announced but not published.

Not legal advice. Review with counsel before relying on any route here.