

Talking Politics at Work . . . and Then the Fight Broke Out – by Kathi Guiney GPHR, SPHR, SCP, President of **YES!**HRSolution.

This supercharged election year, political bombs are blasting all around us: at home, online, and in the office. But talking politics in the office is like calling someone's pet ugly—it goes nowhere good! And when emotions run high, it's easy to land on the battlefield (or start a melee!) even when you don't mean to. So how can you avoid the artillery?

For starters, leave the political-emblazoned clothing at home. Weekends come every 5 days; break out that ultra-patriotic candidate tee then. It may get less stink eye at the grocery store than in the office lunch room. Plus it's unlikely your shirt will get anyone at work to change candidates, so best leave the promotion for elsewhere.

Next, think about what you post on social media. Coworkers or your boss may be connected with you. Heated tirades on the latest election news, and campaign slogans that seem very clever after a cocktail or two may not be forgotten so easily. Is that post worth making a coworker angry or uncomfortable?

Finally, using the break room as “debate central” is probably not allowed by the company, and may end up alienating the very people you hope to persuade. No one wants to be trapped in a debate when all they wanted was to toast their bagel!

Everyone's opinions are important in this amped-up election year. That's what democracy is about! But it's also important to share those opinions at the right time and place, and in such a heated battle, the office isn't really a safe zone. Just remember, it's always an option to gracefully abstain from political discussions at work. There is a reason many voting booths still have curtains, because in the end, voting is a private moment that no amount of battle will change.