

Board Chairman Issues Political Policies on OEO Funded Agencies

Mrs. Marlene Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Directors of RurAL CAP has issued the following memorandum to all RurAL CAP employees, outlining policies and instructions pertaining to political involvement for OEO funded agencies.

OEO Instruction No. 6907-1 states: Grantee and delegate agencies must administer OEO-assisted programs in a politically non-partisan manner and must avoid actions which can reasonably be construed as intended to favor one political party over another or to influence the outcome of any election for public or party office.

The use of program funds, the provision of services, and the assignment of personnel must not result in the identification of the program with any partisan political activity or with any non-partisan political activity which is designed to further the election or defeat of a candidate for public office.

In addition, grantee and delegate agencies may not use program funds, the provision of services, or the assignment of personnel in connection with voter registration activity or with transporting voters or potential voters to the polls.

Anti-poverty programs are, in many communities, live political issues and will often include activities which may become the subject of political controversy. Grantee and delegate agencies may, of course, undertake activities dealing with issues related to their basic program responsibilities.

In carrying out the basic mission and goals of community action, grantee and delegate agencies need not avoid such activities merely because partisan officials or candidates for public office may take or have taken positions with respect to the issue.

Agency officials must, however, deal with questions which have become a subject of political controversy on their merits and not in terms of whether they are supported or opposed by a particular party or candidate.

Except as provided in the in-

struction, employees of grantees and delegate agencies are free to engage in various kinds of political activities during their off-duty hours and in their private capacities.

A broad range of participation in non-partisan elections (e.g. nonpartisan school board elections) is permitted. In addition a broad range of off-duty partisan activity is permitted for employees of private delegate agencies and private single-purpose grantees.

All employees are expected, however, to avoid to the greatest extent any possible identification of their off-duty activities with the OEO-supported program.

Mrs. Johnson advised that three-quarters of the State Legislature, a Governor, U.S. Senator, and a U.S. Representative will be elected in the fall of this year.

In this politically charged atmosphere all employees need to have a clear knowledge of permitted and prohibited political activity if they and-or RurAL CAP are to avoid being charged with "playing partisan politics."