



Restrictions on the Display of Temporary Political Signs

To protect public property and reduce visual clutter and distractions to drivers while protecting residents' rights to free speech, the City of Newport Beach has an extensive Sign Ordinance regulating the display of signs within the City.

Most political campaign signs are a form of temporary noncommercial sign. For constitutional reasons, all temporary signs posted *legally* in Newport Beach are treated in the same way, regardless of the message's topic or content.

Unfortunately, many signs are posted *illegally*. This information is designed to assist political candidates by informing them of the City's regulations for displaying political campaign and issue signs.

1) **Where may political signs be displayed?**

On private property, a certain amount of temporary signage is allowed in addition to any permanent signs allowed on the property under the Sign Ordinance. However, **no sign may be displayed without the permission of the property owner**. If the amount of signage per residence, establishment or parcel exceeds that allowed under the Sign Ordinance, an administrative Notice of Violation may be issued to the property owner.

- **On private residential property** up to three (3) temporary noncommercial signs may be displayed at each residence. If the resident chooses, all three signs could be political signs. No sign permit is needed for these signs. There is no limit on the length of time the noncommercial signs on residential properties may be displayed. However, the three signs must not total more than six square feet in area. (This could permissibly result in one six square foot sign, or two three square foot signs, or three two square foot signs, or other similar combinations.) In addition, when the signs are displayed outdoors, they must be displayed so that the top of the sign structure is no higher than four feet above the ground.
- **On private nonresidential property** the property owner or tenant of a nonresidential establishment may choose to substitute a temporary sign with a noncommercial message (such as a candidate's political sign) for any other temporary sign that he or she could legally display. For example, commercial establishments have allowances for promotional temporary signs and banners up to four times per year, not to exceed 60 total days per year. Commercial establishments are limited in the number, size, and display duration of temporary signs they may display. Display of temporary political signs at these establishments will result in a commensurate reduction of the total temporary sign allowance available for commercial purposes that year at that establishment.

- **On public property, no unattended private party signs may be displayed.** The City of Newport Beach has always prohibited the posting of temporary signs on its streets, sidewalks, parkways, medians, public rights of way, trees, landscaping, structures, telephone and utility poles, and other fixtures. This prohibition is in place to protect the safety of persons posting and removing signs, to reduce damage to City property and landscaping, prevent excessive visual clutter in the public right of way, and to reduce distractions to drivers. When an unattended temporary sign is discovered on public property, it will be removed by the City. If a candidate or his or her supporters continue to violate the Municipal Code in this manner, an administrative Notice of Violation may be issued to deter repeated violations that can lead to unsafe situations for drivers, City staff, and the persons posting the signs.

Signs that are removed from public property by City staff will be disposed of immediately.

Taping or affixing signs to utility poles or other City fixtures is prohibited and causes costly damage during removal.

2) **Durational Limits – when can signs be posted, and when must they be removed?**

- **On private residential property** there is no limit on the period during which the permitted amount of temporary noncommercial signs can be displayed. At some point, however, the tattered and unsightly condition of deteriorating signs may mandate their removal under the Municipal Code’s nuisance provisions.
- **On private nonresidential property** temporary political signs are subject to the time restrictions applied to a commercial establishment’s temporary sign allowance, detailed in the Sign Ordinance.
- **On public property** private party signs are not permitted for any length of time and will be removed by City staff when they are discovered.

3) **Details of Sign Regulations in the Newport Beach Municipal Code**

If you are interested in the details of Newport Beach’s sign regulations, you may want to look at the following sections of the Municipal Code:

No posting of signs, posters or handbills on public fixtures or trees – NBMC 5.42.130

No posting of signs on street – NBMC 5.42.140

Message Substitution Clause – NBMC 20.42.030(C)

Property owner’s permission needed for sign display – NBMC 20.42.030(G)

Definition of temporary sign – NBMC 20.42.040

Types of prohibited signs – NBMC 20.42.050

Standards for temporary signs – NBMC 20.42.090(A) and Table 3-18

No temporary signs on public property – NBMC 20.42.090(B)(1)

Noncommercial signs on private residential property – NBMC 20.42.100(B)(1)(o)