

# [***How to Avoid 2024 Election Talk at Work***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C15-YN31-DY68-1001-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** The upcoming presidential election is likely to become a fraught topic of conversation in the workplace as November 5 approaches.

**Body**

As the presidential election approaches, the possibility that a co-worker, manager or employee could bring up the topic of U.S. ***politics*** in the workplace is particularly daunting.

"Right now, given all the polarization in society, there's no greater potential disrupter to the work environment than the upcoming election," David Grossman, leadership and communication expert and CEO of The Grossman Group agency, told *Newsweek*.

Grossman was recently in a meeting where people were talking about plans for the year ahead, when the topic of the November 5 election came up. "During the discussion, one senior leader made a negative comment about one of the candidates for the next presidential election," he said. "While names were not used, the comment made it clear which side of the aisle he favored. It was said in a way that put down the other political party," he continued.

"While I know this person well enough to know they were having a human moment by sharing their perspective, I suspect he didn't realize the unfortunate unintended consequence: the conversation shifted and was no longer productive."

That comment lasted a few seconds only but left "an awkward silence in the room," Grossman said. "I noticed people catching glances with each other as if they were trying to figure out what to say or do, whether to agree, or change topics," he said.

Grossman felt uncomfortable, and he was sure others did as well. "It felt like my viewpoint wouldn't matter or be respected if he knew my opinion about the election," he told *Newsweek*.

"It got me thinking about how others in the room (including direct reports) may feel: do they agree or have a diverse point of view? Did they feel shamed or minimized for having a different opinion from their boss? Would they feel silenced or pressured to agree just to avoid conflict? It was a one-way jab where others couldn't defend or have constructive discourse," he added.

These are all very valid points. The American public has become increasingly polarized in recent years, especially since [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s rise within the GOP, and [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) are now more divided along ideological lines than they've ever been before.

According to a 2022 study by the Pew Research Center, the dislike that voters feel for the opposite party has now extended to their supporters: a couple of years ago, 72 percent of Republicans regarded Democrats as more immoral, and 63 percent of Democrats say the same about Republicans.

Under these conditions, it can be really hard for pro-Biden and pro-Trump voters to have a good-mannered conversation; but in the workplace, where it might be unavoidable to meet someone with different political opinions, it can't be anything other than that.

Grossman's experience shows how even a brief comment made in passing can totally upend a professional meeting and leave co-workers baffled. For Grossman, the "unnecessary comment" eroded psychological safety and trust among employees.

Here's how to avoid talking about Biden, Trump and the election in the coming months—and how to handle any talk should you be cornered into one.

**Keep Your *Politics* to Yourself**

"For most employees and their well-being, it's best to keep their political views private and refrain from engaging in political debates or arguments in the workplace," Grossman said.

"It used to be no ***politics*** at the Thanksgiving table; now it's best for most employees to not talk ***politics*** at work, either," he added. "***Politics*** is hugely polarizing and is one of the fastest ways to make others feel uncomfortable."

**Be Respectful**

If it's too late for that first piece of advice, and the topic of the upcoming election has already come up, the first thing to keep in mind is to be respectful of those with differing opinions, Grossman said.

"Know that ***politics*** can be personal and sensitive. Give others the opportunity to share their viewpoints without judgment. Focus on policies instead of personalities. Express your thoughts as your opinion, not fact," he recommended.

**Change Topic**

If the conversation becomes heated or uncomfortable, steer it away from ***politics*** by changing the topic, Grossman said.

"Shift attention to a nonpolitical topic by saying, 'I need to interrupt here. Can we talk about work-related matters such as X?' Or express your feelings: 'I'm feeling uncomfortable. Can we change the topic, please?'" he suggested.

**Apologize If in the Wrong**

If you haven't managed to de-escalate an increasingly heated talk, but you've come to regret it, "address the situation carefully and professionally," said Grossman.

"If you know you've made someone feel uncomfortable, acknowledge the possibility. Apologize sincerely. Make it clear your intention was not to cause discomfort," he added.

Managers should also be prepared to handle tense situations. "Beyond having a cultural sense of what is acceptable when discussing ***politics*** in the workplace, they need to be prepared to help diffuse a situation if need be, and also have open and transparent dialogue about what's appropriate conduct and how to set the right example," Grossman said.

**Be Mindful Of Office Policy**

While some organizations are open and even encourage employees discussing ***politics*** at work, believing it can foster diversity and civil discourse; other organizations have banned discussions on ***politics*** to keep employees focused.

While employees should know their workplace's approach to the topic, organizations and companies should know the reasons why they're implementing such an approach, Grossman said.

"Both approaches can work, but the organization's culture will always override any policy written on a piece of paper and has to be the compass in making decisions about establishing policies," he told *Newsweek*. "Whatever direction organizations decide to take, employers should encourage employees to be civic-minded by offering things like time off to vote."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2391305/how-talk-about-us-election-workplace.jpg)

**Graphic**

How Talk About US Election in Workplace

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