

## DEPARTMENTS

### Ethics Inquiries

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#### A Councilmember Asks for Help

**Scenario:** The political environment in the community has turned toxic. A well-respected councilmember has just learned that a petition is being circulated to recall him from office. The petition makes allegations that the councilmember says are false, and he has asked the city manager to assist him in responding to them. The city manager sought advice on how to answer the councilmember's request for assistance.

**Response:** Any time there is an election campaign or a recall campaign, the city or county manager needs to take a look at Tenet 7 of the ICMA Code of Ethics, to reinforce the importance of staying out of any campaign activity involving an elected official: "Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body."

It is appropriate for the city manager to respond to specific requests for information from individual members of the city council or from candidates for office. The manager, however, should only *respond* to requests for information and should avoid getting involved in any discussions about political strategy. One of the most important principles in the ICMA Code of Ethics is that of political neutrality. A manager best serves a community by maintaining an independent and professional demeanor during campaign season.