

## Political and campaign signs

Any signs along roadways, including political/campaign signs, pose potential hazards. Improperly placed signs can:

- Obstruct a motorist's view
- Distract a driver's attention
- Compound damages or injuries in the event of a crash
- Endanger the safety of individuals who are erecting signs along busy highways
- Present obstacles to crews who maintain (mow) roadways 

Political/campaign signs, especially larger billboard-type signs, are particularly dangerous when placed in vision areas at intersections.

### Signs prohibited on state highway right of way

Wisconsin law prohibits the placement of signs on any rural or urban portion of the state highway system right of way. This prohibition applies to commercial advertising and covers political signs, posters and banners. As a general rule, highway right of way in rural areas extends to beyond both shoulders and ditches and any adjoining fence line. In urban areas, boulevard medians and the terrace area between any sidewalk and the street are part of the highway and therefore off-limits for installation of signs of any type.

Generally, people can actively carry signs for political candidates or other purposes on sidewalks and within highway right of way, provided the signs do not obstruct views for traffic. Signs that are so large that they block views for motorists, particularly near corners, may be prohibited because of the danger caused by visual obstruction.

[Wisconsin Administrative Code Trans 201.16](#) details the conditions under which political/campaign signs may be placed adjacent to the state highway system (state, federal and interstate highways).

Local municipalities may have additional guidelines regulating the placement of political signs along county highways or local roads and streets.

### Signs on private property

Political signs are allowed on private property along the state highway system without a billboard permit as long as the signs:

- Do not exceed 32 square feet in size.
- Contain no flashing lights or moving parts.  

When placing political yard or lawn signs on private property adjacent to the state highway system, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- In urban areas, signs are prohibited from the roadway area to at least one foot past the sidewalk.
- In urban areas without sidewalks, signs must be at least 15 feet from the pavement edge.
- Signposts, street name marker posts and most utility poles are all within highway right of way.
- Signs are NOT allowed within highway medians.

### **Dealing with improper political signs**

Highway maintenance workers will remove political signs found within state highway right of way – especially if the signs pose a safety hazard.

Highway crews are asked to make reasonable attempts to preserve campaign signs that are taken down and to provide campaign offices with an opportunity to claim the signs.

[Sec. 86.19, Wis. Statutes](#) does provide for a \$10 to \$100 fine for signs that violate the law.

### **For more information, contact**

[Regional outdoor advertising program coordinators](#)

Questions about the content of this page:

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