



NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Sally Schubert Haas, Treasurer
Henderson County Democratic Party
P.O. Box 186
Hendersonville, NC 28791

April 1, 2026

Re: Request for an advisory opinion under N.C.G.S. § 163-278.23 regarding political party headquarters building funds

Dear Ms. Haas,

Thank you for your correspondence on behalf of the Henderson County Democratic Party. The following written opinion is provided in accordance with N.C.G.S. § 163-278.23. In your letter, you asked whether office security systems (such as ADT Security Services) could be paid from party headquarters building funds. You noted in your letter that “security services are directly related to the operation and safeguarding of the headquarters building.”

Building security fixtures, such as cameras and sensors that are physically fastened to the headquarters building, are permissible expenditures under N.C.G.S. § 163-278.19B(c). Monitoring and alarm services require reliance on a different provision of the authorizing statute.

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 163-278.19B(b)(4)b., donations to a political party headquarters building fund may be spent to pay for “monthly or bimonthly utility expenses incurred to operate the principal headquarters building.” There is no definition of “utility” in Article 22A. Black’s Law Dictionary defines a utility as “a business enterprise that performs an essential public service and that is subject to governmental regulation.” Black’s Law Dictionary (11th ed. 2019).

In reviewing the meaning of “utility” in 2024, Executive Director Brinson Bell concluded that building funds could be used for internet connection and internet services for the principal headquarters building in part “because internet connectivity is essential to commerce, community, and free expression today.” Written Opinion 2024-04-19 at p 2.


Security services have become a necessity for both current and former office holders. In 2017, the Federal Elections Commission recognized “the current threat environment facing Members of Congress due to their status as federal office holders,” when authorizing the use of candidate committee funds to pay for the installation and upgrade of residential security systems. FEC, Advisory Opinion 2017-07 at p 3.

The threat environment for North Carolina candidates and party committees is heightened as well. In recent years we have seen headquarters buildings and candidates’ homes vandalized or damaged. *See GOP headquarters firebombed in NC county*, WXII (Oct. 17, 2016), <https://www.wxii12.com/article/nc-republican-party-headquarters-vandalized-and-damaged/6479699>; *Carteret County Democratic Party Headquarters vandalized, police investigating*, WCTI 12 (July 15, 2024), <https://wcti12.com/news/local/carteret-county-democratic-headquarters-vandalized-police-investigating>; *Shot fired at family home of N. Carolina US House candidate*, WXII (Nov. 4, 2022), <https://www.wxii12.com/article/nc-shot-fired-family-home-house-candidate-pat-harrigan/41872870>; *Joe Bruno, Local candidate’s property struck several times in drive-by*, WSOC (Feb. 17, 2026), <https://www.wsoctv.com/news/local/local-candidates-property-struck-several-times-drive-by/6LVE52PC2VBNJLXIDDYXMWSTIM/>.

While security systems may not qualify as a utility in all other contexts, security fixtures and services are necessary and essential to candidate and political party free expression and community participation today. Therefore, it is my conclusion that office security systems for a principal headquarters building may be paid for from party headquarters building funds.

This opinion will be filed with the Codifier of Rules for publication in the North Carolina Register.

Sincerely,



Sam M. Hayes
Executive Director
North Carolina State Board of Elections