

CITY OF PALOS VERDES ESTATES



PROTEST Q&A

- Q: Can anyone conduct a protest in the City?
A: Yes. Generally, all citizens have a constitutionally protected right to expression (free speech, assembly, and protest). The First Amendment prohibits restrictions based on the content of speech. One principle to understand is that it is not what the protester says, but how the message is stated – if an organized protest causes serious disruption, law enforcement may intervene.
- Q: Where and when can a person engage in free speech activity?
A: Generally, all types of expression are constitutionally protected in “traditional public forums,” such as streets, sidewalks, and parks. Police and government officials are allowed to place non-discriminatory and narrowly drawn time, place and manner restrictions on the exercise of First Amendment rights, should the circumstances necessitate it.
- Q: What does the Police Department do when there is a protest?
A: It is the duty of the Police Department to ensure that public safety is maintained, while simultaneously protecting the protester’s right to expression.
- Q: Is a permit necessary to protest and, if so, what are the associated fees?
A: No permit is required within the City of Palos Verdes Estates for assemblies or protests on public streets or sidewalks. Protesters cannot block streets or unreasonably delay or impact traffic or safety in the City. If the demonstration requires the set-up of tables, chairs, or other items, a permit may be required. Please contact the Police Department at (310) 378-4211 for additional information.
- Q: Who pays for extra police assigned to protest events?
A: Each protest event is unique and is individually evaluated by the Police Department based on available information to assess time, place, size, and impacts on traffic, safety, etc. The Police Department does not respond to all protests, but develops a response plan to ensure public safety is maintained during the event, which may include additional staffing. Often, the City’s Police Department is supported by its Reserve Police Officers – fully sworn police officers who work part-time as volunteers. When paid staff is used for maintaining public safety during protests, their costs are often unrecoverable and are absorbed by the City.
- Q: May I distribute leaflets and other literature on public sidewalks without a permit?
A: Yes. Pedestrians on public sidewalks may be approached to hand them leaflets, newspapers, petitions, and solicitations for donations without a permit. Such activity may not obstruct the public right-of-way or entrances to buildings or harass the pedestrian if informed the person is not interested. Note that a permit may be required to set up tables, chairs, or other items. Please contact (310) 378-4211 for additional information.
- Q: Can signs be held and displayed during a protest?
A: It depends. Signs may be held and displayed so long as they do not violate the provisions of Palos Verdes Estates Municipal Code section 9.05.020; which states that it is a misdemeanor to carry any length of lumber, wood, wood lath, hard plastic or other hard material, unless that object is 1/4th of an inch or less in thickness and two inches or less in width, or if not generally rectangular in shape, such object shall not exceed ¾ -inch in its thickest dimension.