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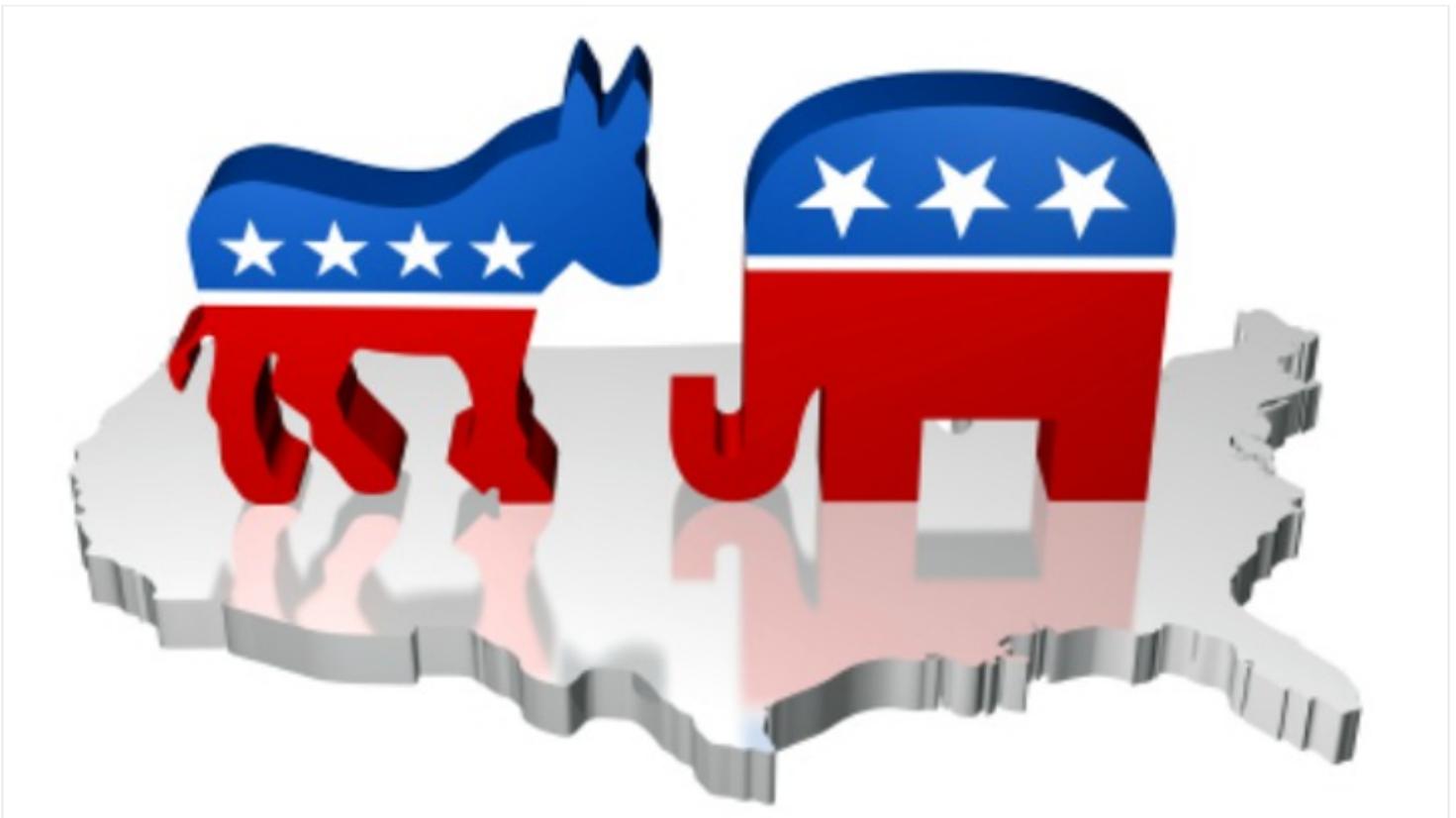
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HUMAN RESOURCES & PAYROLL

A Divisive Issue: Talking Politics in the Workplace

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Aug. 25, 2020



There may not be many things that people on all sides of the political spectrum in the U.S. can agree on these days, but here's one: With the election nearing, politics is

a volatile issue. But while it may be top of mind right now, is it safe to talk about politics at work? That's not as easy to agree on, according to a new survey from global staffing firm Robert Half.

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Additional findings:

- Among the 28 U.S. cities in the survey, San Francisco (63%) has the highest percentage of workers, by far, who are on board with talking about politics with colleagues, followed by New York (34%) and Los Angeles (33%).
- Professionals in Cincinnati, Phoenix (35% each), Cleveland and Philadelphia (33% each) are most opposed to political discussions with coworkers.
- More respondents ages 25 to 40 (32%) than those ages 41 to 54 (13%) and 55 and older (9%) said conversations about politics are acceptable.
- More women (30%) than men (20%) said it's inappropriate to bring up politics with colleagues.
- Professionals without children (31%) were more likely than working parents (20%) to report that political discussions are unsuitable for work.

“Politics can be an emotionally charged and polarizing topic,” said Paul McDonald, senior executive director of Robert Half. “While non-work-related conversations can help colleagues connect — particularly when working remotely — heated political discussions can have a harmful effect on professional relationships and productivity.”

McDonald added, “Some political talk is inevitable, but workers need to be extra sensitive to and respectful of others’ perspectives. Even with the best intentions, miscommunication can occur and lead to unnecessary conflict.”

Robert Half offers three tips for navigating political talk with colleagues:

1. **Tread lightly.** If you choose to participate in political conversations, keep it light and constructive. Should the discussion become confrontational, move on to another subject.
2. **Decline politely.** Don't feel pressured into sharing your political views. It's OK to bow out of a conversation and let others know you prefer not to chime in.

3. Speak up. If a colleague says or does something that makes you uncomfortable, pull the person aside and explain what's bothering you. For more serious matters, consult your manager or human resources.

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