

Non-profit helping with RNC to pull posting for job that paid \$5.76 an hour

Volunteer Coordinator Fellow

Republican National Convention Host Committee - Cleveland, OH

The Cleveland 2016 Host Committee is a non-profit organization with no political affiliation. The Host Committee's primary purpose is to ensure that Cleveland is best represented during the convention and that the 2016 RNC has its most successful convention to-date. The goal of the Volunteer Program is to recruit, train and manage 5,000 community engagement volunteers that will serve as ambassadors for the city during the RNC July 18-21, 2016.

The Volunteer Coordinator Fellow will assist the Volunteer Manager in recruiting volunteers and providing direction, coordination and consultation for all volunteer functions associated with the 2016 Host Committee for the Republican National Convention. The fellow will serve as a liaison to the volunteer captains, volunteers, and the Host Committee staff and interns.

Term of Fellowship:

- Position will be run August 2015 -- mid-August 2016.
- 40 hours per week including some evening and weekend hours closer to the convention
- MUST be available for additional and extended hours beginning July 1, 2016
- Salary is \$1000 per month, does not include any additional benefits

Key Responsibilities:

- Serve as a main contact, providing ongoing support, communication and guidance to the volunteers during recruitment and registration through the end of the convention.
- Assist with preparation and execution of multiple large-scale volunteer training sessions, including development of training materials.

The Cleveland 2016 Host Committee says it will pull this job listing after Northeast Ohio Media Group inquired about its low pay. The Host Committee is a local non profit that is working with the national Republican Party to plan the July 2016 Republican National Convention. (*indeed.com*)



By [Andrew J. Tobias, Northeast Ohio Media Group](#)

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CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The Cleveland non-profit helping the Republican Party organize the upcoming Republican National Convention says it will revise [a posting for a volunteer coordinator job](#) that would have paid \$5.76 an hour, following an inquiry from Northeast Ohio Media Group.

The listing, posted on Wednesday, sought a full-time "volunteer coordinator fellow," a position that will exist between August 2015 and mid-August 2016. The listing advertised a salary of \$1,000 a month, with no health benefits.

The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 an hour, and the current state minimum wage is \$8.10 an hour.

An official with the Cleveland 2016 Host Committee initially said on Wednesday evening that the position was intended to be a paid internship. But David Gilbert, president and CEO of the Host Committee, said in a Thursday email that the organization will pull the listing after NEOMG asked about the position's low pay.

The media outlet consulted with a local expert in wage and hour issues, who said Thursday that the job as originally posted likely violated state and federal labor laws.

"We did post the position before consulting with legal counsel, something we realize should have been done," Gilbert said. "While the position was meant to be a fellowship, after checking with our legal counsel and further discussion, the decision has been made to re-post the position as a full-time staff function with compensation that reflects the job description. We are removing the listing on indeed.com and will be re-posting the position soon. We apologize for any confusion that has resulted."

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The Host Committee is a non-profit organization, led by local civic and business leaders, that formed around Cleveland's attempt to attract the Republican National Convention. Its responsibilities are to raise money for the convention, as well as to secure venues and volunteers needed to host the event.

The Host Committee works with the Committee on Arrangements, a subsidiary of the national Republican Party that actually puts on the convention.

The original job description said the volunteer coordinator would help recruit and train 5,000 volunteers who will help with the convention, scheduled from July 18-21, 2016. The listing said the job may include evening and weekend hours as the convention approaches, and that the employee "MUST be available for additional and extended hours beginning July 1, 2016."

Anthony J. Lazzaro, a Cleveland attorney who specializes in wage and hour law, said after reviewing the original posting that the position as described would violate federal and state minimum wage and overtime laws once the employee were to begin working.

"My guess is that the person who posted this doesn't understand the overtime or minimum wage requirements, and is thinking 'This is a volunteer-type of position and we don't have to pay this person, but we're going to throw them a bone and give them a thousand bucks [a month]," Lazzaro said. "But they're definitely wrong about that."

It is "generally permissible" for charitable non-profits like the Host Committee to use unpaid interns, according to a fact sheet ([PDF](#)) produced by the U.S. Department of Labor.

But Lazzaro said the Host Committee couldn't argue for the "unpaid intern" exemption because the position is not similar to training given in an educational environment, and the position would be performed for the benefit of the Host Committee – not the employee.

There are certain legal tests used to judge whether a position meets the criteria to be an "employee" and thus subject to minimum wage and overtime laws, Lazzaro said. The volunteer coordinator job meets a number of those tests, he said.

He said the federal wage law applies to individual employees if their position requires regular use of "channels of commerce," such as using the Internet to communicate. It applies to an entire organization if that organization makes more than \$500,000 in annual revenues – the Host Committee has a fundraising goal of \$64 million – and if more than two employees of the organization handle or use goods that have been moved in or produced for commerce, such as a computer, he said.

"As a summary, the Host Committee would violate federal and state minimum wage and overtime laws if it employs someone in this position and requires the person to work 40-plus hours a week," Lazzaro said.

July 10, 2016: This story was updated to clarify the duties of the volunteer coordinator position



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