For the past month the Bethel School District, in hopes of a favorable bond “revote” in an upcoming special election on April 26, has been aggressively promoting their position in favor of the bond issue by using 1) multiple large bill boards and 2) numerous smaller advertisement banners on Bethel School District buses parked near their schools. These promotions, plastered throughout the district, do not seem to be funded by PACs and have the Bethel School District website/logo clearly visible. Many of the promotions are blatantly political in nature and in no way represent unbiased information.

The Superintendent of the Bethel School District, in a recent email to me to respond to my inquiry to the President of the Bethel School Board, freely admits to the use of public funds and property for this campaign but contends that these promotions are purely informational – even though such a wide-spread and blatant campaign was not used for the first vote on this bond issue last fall. This leads me to dispute his creative claims. The timing, nature, and size of these promotions all speak for themselves – as well as the content of the promotional messages.

Any “reasonable person” would see these actions as part of an active campaign to pass the upcoming bond. The use of multiple, strategically-placed public school buses with full length banners covering both sides is most offensive and reprehensible.

RCW 42.17A.555

Use of public office or agency facilities in campaigns—Prohibition—Exceptions.

No elective official nor any employee of his or her office nor any person appointed to or employed by any public office or agency may use or authorize the use of **any of the facilities** of a public office or agency, directly or indirectly, **for the purpose of assisting a campaign** for election of any person to any office or **for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition.** Facilities of a public office or agency include, but are not limited to, use of stationery, postage, machines, and equipment, use of employees of the office or agency during working hours, vehicles, office space, publications of the office or agency, and clientele lists of persons served by the office or agency.

I ask that you please investigate this issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bruce Finnie

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