



STATE OF WASHINGTON
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

711 Capitol Way Rm. 206, PO Box 40908 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0908 • (360) 753-1111 • FAX (360) 753-1112
Toll Free 1-877-601-2828 • E-mail: pdc@pdc.wa.gov • Website: www.pdc.wa.gov

December 21, 2022

Sent electronically to John Snaza at snazajohn@gmail.com

Subject: Complaint filed by Melissa Genson, PDC Case 113372

Dear Sheriff Snaza:

Below is a copy of an electronic letter sent to Melissa Genson concerning a complaint filed with the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) on October 11, 2022.

As noted below in the letter to Ms. Genson, the PDC has dismissed this matter in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1) and will not conduct a more formal investigation into this allegation or take further enforcement action in this matter.

If you have questions, you may contact Erick Agina, Compliance Officer at (360) 586-2869, toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at pdc@pdc.wa.gov

Sincerely,

Endorsed by:

s/_____
Erick Agina, Compliance Officer

s/_____
Kim Bradford, Deputy Director for
Peter Lavalley, Executive Director



Public Disclosure Commission
Shining Light on Washington Politics Since 1972



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December 21, 2022

Sent electronically to Melissa Genson at missygenon@gmail.com

Subject: Complaint regarding John Snaza, PDC Case 113372

Dear Ms. Genson:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) has completed its review of the complaint you filed on October 11, 2022. The complaint alleged that Sheriff John Snaza, an incumbent County Sheriff for Thurston County seeking re-election to the same office in the 2022 election year, may have violated RCW 42.17A.555 by using public office or agency facilities to promote/assist his re-election campaign.

PDC staff reviewed the allegation listed in the complaint to determine whether a formal investigation or enforcement action is warranted. Staff reviewed the four attachments submitted with the complaint, the relevant statute(s) and rule(s); PDC Interpretation 04-02 "Guidelines for Local Government Agencies in Election Campaigns;" the October 24, 2022, response from Sheriff John Snaza on behalf of his 2022 re-election Campaign and all other relevant information.

Based on staff's review, we found the following:

- On May 25, 2022, John Snaza timely filed a Candidate Registration (C-1) report declaring his candidacy for re-election to the office of County Sheriff in Thurston County, selecting the "Full Reporting" option, and listing Laurence Flinn as Treasurer.
- RCW 42.17A.555 requires that no elective official nor employee of his or her office nor any person appointed to or employed by any public office or agency to use or authorize the use of any of the facilities of a public office or agency directly or indirectly to assist a campaign for election or any person to any office.
- The complaint alleged that John Snaza, a candidate for the office of Thurston County Sheriff in the 2022 election cycle, used the resources of the office of Thurston County Sheriff to assist in his re-election. Specifically, you alleged that: "Sheriff John Snaza violated RCW 42.52.180 by forcing a female deputy, against her will, to make a public statement against Snaza's opponent that she did not believe was true. This occurred at work, during work hours. The sole purpose of Snaza's action was to assist his political campaign." You further alleged that: Sheriff Snaza publicly induced voters to request documents from his office, for the sole purpose of assisting his campaign."
- In his response to the complaint, received by PDC staff on October 24, 2022, Sheriff Snaza stated: "In July 2022, an allegation of a policy violation was brought forth by members of the Thurston County Sheriff's

Officer against Deputy Derek Sanders. Deputy Sanders is an employee of TCSO and is subject to the policies of TCSO that are a condition of his employment. This allegation was brought forth by members of his own bargaining unit and was not brought forth by the administration. This internal investigation was handled in complete accordance with TCSO policy and procedures. At no time did I have influence or involvement in this investigation, and this was not done for political gain. The investigation was handled by Sgt. Casebolt of our Office of Professional Standards who reports directly to Undersheriff Brady. The allegations brought forth by Ms. Genson in this PDC complaint are not accurate or factual and no TCSO resources were used for my political campaign.”

- Staff interviewed Sergeant Casebolt who handled the internal investigation against Deputy Sanders and found no evidence of undue influence from Sheriff Snaza or members of his chain of command, that would point to possible use of facilities to help his 2022 re-election campaign for the office of Thurston County Sheriff’s office. Sergeant Casebolt noted that it is the policy of the TCSO to investigate all complaints brought forth to protect the agency from liability and other allegations that might be brought against TCSO in the future. As such, Sergeant Casebolt noted that the TCSO internal affairs handles all personnel related complaints and employees’ statements related to any active personnel complaint(s) investigations are compelled. In other words, all employees who have pertinent information regarding a personnel complaint that is being investigated, are required to provide statement(s) to the investigative internal affairs staff whether they would like to participate or not.
- In the course of reviewing this complaint, staff requested and received a copy of the TCSO Policy Manual related to Personnel Complaints Investigation (Policy 1010). The manual, under “Withdrawal of Complaints,” notes or states: “The cooperation of the complainant is important and desired, but it is not mandatory. At times, the complainant may wish to withdraw their complaint. This request cannot be refused; however, it is the policy of this office to continue the investigation as far as possible even without the assistance of the complainant. This protects the office from later allegations or intimidation, bureaucratic inertia, and allegations which can no longer be satisfactorily investigated or explained due to passage of time.”

Based on the above review, staff has determined that, in this instance, no evidence supports a finding of a violation of RCW 42.17A.555 that warrants further investigation.

Based on this information, the PDC has dismissed your complaint in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1)(a).

If you have questions, you may contact me at (360) 586-2869, toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at erick.agina@pdc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Endorsed by:

s/_____
Erick Agina, Compliance Officer

s/_____
Kim Bradford, Deputy Director for
Peter Lavalley, Executive Director

cc: Sheriff John Snaza