



**State of Washington
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION**

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February 13, 2025

Delivered electronically to Dr. Kory Kalahar at kalahar.k@wenatcheeschools.org and Diana Haglund at Haglund.d@wenatcheeschools.org

Subject: PDC Case 156953 regarding Wenatchee School District 246 Officials

Dr. Kalahar and Ms. Haglund:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) completed its review of the complaint filed by Bill Sullivan on June 23, 2025. The complaint alleged a violation of RCW 42.17A.555 for use of public facilities for the purpose of supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure.

Applicable Laws & Rules

- RCW 42.17A.555 prohibits elected or appointed officials, their employees, and employees of a public office or agency from using, or authorizing the use of, public office/agency facilities (resources), directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting an election campaign or for the promotion of, or opposition to, any ballot proposition.

However, the following activities do not violate .555:

- Action taken at a public meeting to express a collective decision, or to vote upon a motion, proposal, resolution, order or ordinance, or to support or oppose to a ballot proposition so long as 1) any required notice of the meeting includes the title and number of the ballot proposition; and 2) members of the council or the public are afforded an equal opportunity to express an opposing view.
- A statement made by an elected official in support of, or in opposition to, a ballot proposition at an open press conference or in response to a specific inquiry.
- WAC 390-05-271(1) states that RCW 42.17A.555 does not restrict the right of any individual to express their own personal views concerning supporting or opposing any candidate or ballot proposition if such expression does not involve a use of public office or agency facilities.
- PDC Interpretation No. 04-02 are guidelines set forth by the PDC to aid local governmental agencies in complying with RCW 42.17A.555.

Background & Findings

- The Wenatchee School District (the District) is in Chelan County, Washington. The District serves 7,600 students and includes one early learning center and preschool, seven elementary schools, three middle schools, one k-8th grade alternative school, two high schools, and a technical skills center.
- On July 1, 2023, Dr. Kory Kalahar became the interim Superintendent of the District. Diana Haglund is the Director of Communications for the District. Dr. Kalahar is Ms. Haglund's supervisor.
- The District regularly communicates in a variety of ways with the public about official business affecting students, parents, and the community it serves.
- During election year 2023, the District's school board had five positions on the ballot for election. Two positions ran unopposed, and the remaining three were competitive. The general election occurred on November 7, 2023.
- November 2, 2023, six-thousand copies of a political mailer, known as *The Wenatchee Record* (aka *The Record*), were distributed to families within the District. Glenn Dobbs of the Wenatchee Values Alliance developed and financed the political mailer.
- Between November 3, 2023, and November 7, 2023, at the direction of Dr. Kalahar, Ms. Haglund responded to the political mailer as follows: (1) an electronic response that went to district leaders and included a prepared "public response" for use by leadership, (2) English and Spanish language messages to district parents via the Bloomz 2-way electronic messaging platform, (3) one post to the District's website, (4) a post to the District's Facebook account, and (5) one post to the District's 'X' account. Dr. Kalahar also personally sent an all-staff email to district-wide constituencies. These communications characterized *The Record* as a "political mailer," drew attention to the "election only days away," stated the mailer "contained misleading information" and "false narratives," said the purpose of the mailer was "for political gain," and implicated candidates running for school board as authors of articles in the mailer.
- On November 5, 2023, under the supervision of Dr. Kalahar, Ms. Haglund used her District email to correspond with Gabriel Garcia, a reporter for the *Wenatchee World*, asking for "limited media exposure on any issues that could be considered controversial and further any false narratives." She also asked the *Wenatchee World* to run an "Opinion Editorial by Superintendent Kalahar in the coming days."
- On November 6, 2023, the *Wenatchee World* ran an Opinion Editorial written by Dr. Kalahar that included his title, referred to the political mailer, and indicated Dr. Kalahar spoke for the District in the editorial. Ms. Haglund, under Dr. Kalahar's supervision, promoted the article by posting on the District's Facebook account.

- The complaint alleges a violation of RCW 42.17A.555 occurring when on November 7, 2023, Dr. Kalahar emailed members of the Wenatchee School Board. In this instance, and in the next communications that followed, there is no evidence of a violation.
- The complaint alleges a violation of RCW 42.17A.555 occurring when on November 6, 2023, Dr. Kalahar responded to an email from a student in the Wenatchee School District. The email from the student, dated November 5, 2023, was about their concerns related to candidates running for election to the Wenatchee School Board and the materials in *The Record*. The student was specifically reaching out to Dr. Kalahar to learn how she, as a student leader, could get more involved. Dr. Kalahar's response outlined several ways the student could get more involved in expressing their views and their leadership. In this instance there is no evidence of a violation.
- The Respondents do not have previous warnings or violations of PDC requirements.

Summary and Resolution

Pursuant to WAC 390-37-060(1)(d), Diana Haglund is receiving a formal written warning concerning their involvement in the use of public facilities to proliferate communications during an election. RCW 42.17A.555 does not prevent a public agency, nor its employees, from making an objective and fair presentation of the facts if such activity is part of the normal and regular conduct of the agency. However, in no case will the PDC view a promotional campaign or marketing effort related to an election as normal and regular conduct. There is evidence that the tone and tenor of the language, as well as the quantity and frequency of the communications, right before an election, were promotional and a marketing effort. With this formal written warning, staff expects Ms. Haglund to in the future comply with all requirements of RCW 42.17A.555 and PDC guidance outlined in [Guidelines for School Districts in Election Campaigns](#) and in a [2015 staff analysis](#). The Commission will consider the formal written warning in deciding on further Commission action if there are future violations of PDC laws or rules.

Dr. Kory Kalahar has completed a Statement of Understanding (SOU) and paid a \$600 civil penalty in accordance with WAC 390-37-143 (Brief Enforcement Penalty Schedule), acknowledging a violation of RCW 42.17A.555 by using public facilities for the purpose of supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot. The \$600 penalty assessed resolves the allegations listed in this case.

Based on this information, the PDC has dismissed this matter in accordance with [RCW 42.17A.755\(1\)](#).

If you have questions, you may contact Tanya Mercier, Compliance Officer, by e-mail at pdcc@pdc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,
/s/ Electronically signed
 Tanya Mercier
 Compliance Officer

Endorsed by,
/s/ Electronically signed
 Peter Frey Lavalley
 Executive Director

cc: Bill Sullivan