



State of Washington

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

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Public Disclosure Commission Statement of Understanding Wenatchee School District Officials PDC Case 156953

I, Dr. Kory Kalahar, in my capacity as Superintendent of Wenatchee School District 246 (the District), hereby acknowledge that during election year 2023, I violated RCW 42.17A.555 by using public facilities for the purpose of supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure.

The facts are as follows:

- 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, I became the interim Superintendent of the District. Diana Haglund was the Director of Communications for the District. I was 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, under my supervision and direction, 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. I 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 my supervision, 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 me. I used my title, spoke for the District in the editorial, and referenced the political mailer. Under my supervision, Ms. Haglund promoted the article by posting on the District's Facebook account.

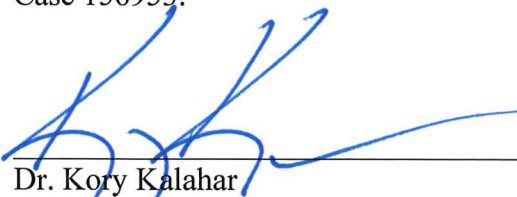
Acknowledgements:

- I acknowledge that RCW 42.17A.555 prohibits the use of public agency facilities for the purpose of assisting or opposing a candidate's campaign for election. The statute 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.
- I acknowledge that the PDC has developed Guidelines for School Districts in Election Campaigns and a 2015 staff analysis to assist school districts and other public agencies in determining whether an activity is permitted under RCW 42.17A.555.
- I acknowledge that the basic principles in the Guidelines inform school districts that, in no case, will the PDC view a promotional/marketing effort related to a campaign or election as normal and regular conduct.
- I acknowledge that some of the language in my communications on behalf of the District, as well as the proliferation of communications right before the election, constituted the type of marketing effort that is prohibited under RCW 42.17A.555.

I would like to avoid the time and expense of a Brief Adjudicative Proceeding (Brief Enforcement Hearing). Therefore, in lieu of a hearing, I acknowledge that at my direction and under my authority District officials violated Washington State law as described above and agree to enter into this *Statement of Understanding* (SOU) to resolve the above matter with the PDC.

In accordance with the Penalty Schedule adopted by the Commission for Brief Enforcement Hearings set forth in WAC 390-37-143, I agree to pay a \$600 penalty for an acknowledged violation of RCW 42.17A.555 as described above.

I understand that, by signing this SOU, I acknowledge the violation of Chapter 42.17A RCW set forth above and waive my right to a hearing in this matter. I further understand that signing this SOU and returning it to the PDC with a payment for the \$600 civil penalty will resolve the issue of using District facilities to influence an election for election year 2023 as described in PDC Case 156953.



Dr. Kory Kalahar
Superintendent, Wenatchee School District 246



Date Signed