



**State of Washington
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION**

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September 15, 2025

Delivered electronically to matthew@wsrp.org; joel@ard.law & cg.edwards53@gmail.com

Subject: PDC Case 162582 regarding Washington State Republican Party

Messrs. Frolich, Ard and Edwards:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) completed its review of the complaint filed by Washington State Democratic Central Committee on November 4, 2024. The complaint alleged violations of RCW 42.17A.335 for sponsoring political advertising containing a false statement of material fact about candidates for public office.

Applicable Laws and Rules

[RCW 42.17A.335](#) states, in relevant part, that it is a violation of this chapter for a person to sponsor with actual malice a statement constituting libel or defamation per se including political advertising that contains a false statement of material fact about a candidate for public office.

Background and Findings

- Maria Beltran, Ana Ruiz Kennedy and Chelsea Dimas were candidates for State Senate or State House of Representatives in Legislative District 14 in the November 5, 2024, general election.
- In October 2024, Washington State Republican Party (WSRP) sponsored text messages opposing the 2024 candidacies of Maria Beltran, Ana Ruiz Kennedy and Chelsea Dimas.
- The complaint included the following language from WSRP's text message, as translated from its original Spanish:

This is Matteo from the Washington State Republican Party. Maria Beltran, Ana [Ruiz] Kennedy [sic], and Chelsea Dimas support chemically castrating your children in school without your knowledge or consent. They reject God's design for two genders and want to confuse your children about whether they are boys or girls. They are deranged to the point of wanting to eliminate the Spanish language, which is why the words are no longer feminine or masculine, but non-binary. They call themselves "Latinx" instead of "Latino." They hate you, they hate your family, they hate God, and they hate the truth. Don't let them represent you!

- The complainant stated, “While every part of this message is crude and abusive, debasing civil discourse in Washington State... the second sentence, in particular, violates RCW 42.17A.335(1)(a), as it constitutes sponsorship of political advertising or an electioneering communication that contains a false statement of material fact about not one, but three candidates for public office, where the statement constitutes libel or defamation per se and is made with actual malice.”
- Joel Ard, counsel for WSRP, responded to the complaint, stating that “the message is not only true but also accurately reflects both the Democrat [sic] Party’s positions and the response of the vast majority of Americans to those reprehensible policy offerings.”
- Ard tied the message to the candidates’ lack of support for Initiative 2081, which required schools to give prior notification to parents when medical services are offered or provided to their child. The Respondent claims that “administration to minors of both gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists as well as cross-sex hormones” is one of the “medical experiments being foisted on their children in Washington’s public schools.”
- News reporting about the text messages cited by the complainant noted: “... exactly nobody supports involuntary chemical castration of children in schools, which puts this firmly in the category of the Big Lie politicking practiced by Lyndon Johnson back in the day and by Donald Trump today.”
- The same news story reported, “Some Republicans view progressives’ support for minors receiving gender-affirming care such as puberty blockers without parental permission as a major political vulnerability to be exploited in swing districts.”

Summary and Resolution

RCW 42.17A.335(1) states, in part, “It is a violation of this chapter for a person to sponsor with actual malice a statement constituting libel or defamation per se under the following circumstances: (a) Political advertising or an electioneering communication that contains a false statement of material fact about a candidate for public office...”

RCW 42.17A.005(1) states, "Actual malice" means to act with knowledge of falsity or with reckless disregard as to truth or falsity.

The statement at issue here does not meet the actual malice standard. The complaint asks the PDC to be the arbiter of whether a candidate’s lack of support for an initiative that supporters championed as an answer to concerns about gender-affirming care for minors is tantamount to support for allowing schools to provide that care without parents’ knowledge. That level of interpretation involves scrutiny of political debate, which invokes strong First Amendment protections. Such assessments are best left to the public and the political forum.

Based on these findings, PDC staff have determined the possible spuriousness of the text messages does not warrant further investigation by the PDC. The PDC has dismissed this matter in accordance with [RCW 42.17A.755\(1\)](#).

If you have questions, you may contact Jennifer Hansen at 1-360-753-1111, toll-free at 1-877-601-2828 or by e-mail at pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Jennifer Hansen

Jennifer Hansen
Compliance Officer

Endorsed by,

Electronically signed by Kim Bradford

Kim Bradford
Deputy Director
For Peter Frey Lavalley
Executive Director

cc: Washington State Democratic Central Committee