



December 13, 2024

Washington Public Disclosure Commission
ATTN: Erick O. Agina - Compliance Officer
P. O. Box 40908
Olympia, WA 98504-0908

Re: PDC Case Number **162804**

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**EQUITY
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COMMUNITY**

Dear Public Disclosure Commission:

The Kent School District submits this response regarding the complaint alleging that the District used public resources to support a recent ballot measure in violation of **RCW 42.17A.555**. The complaint asserts the following:

- On March 12, 2024, Deputy Superintendent Wade Barringer sent an email to leadership with the subject, "Important Levy Information".
- The communication stressed sending out messages to families. Community members were flooded with levy-related communications at a much higher frequency than is typical from the district.
- The District used an opt-in system for text message for "emergency announcements."

The District maintains that this conduct does not constitute improper use of public resources, as follows:

1. Accurate, Objective, and Factual Information

The District asserts that its communications related to the ballot measure were factual, objective, and designed to inform the community about the potential impact of the measure on the District's operations, consistent with the Public Disclosure Commission's (PDC) guidance. Specifically:

- Messages shared with the community included information regarding enrollment trends, funding challenges, and the anticipated consequences of the levy's passage or failure.
- At no point did these communications include language urging a "yes" vote or advocating for or against the measure. Instead, they were limited to presenting facts and explaining the context of the ballot measure.

2. Alignment with Normal and Regular Communication Practices

The District has historically maintained regular communication with its community on major policy issues. This includes updates on topics such as budget planning, curriculum changes, school safety initiatives, and enrollment projections.

- The approach used for informing the community about the ballot measure aligns with the definitions of "normal and regular" communication under WAC 390-05-271 and WAC 390-05-273.

- For example, past communications on other significant matters, such as facility upgrades or pandemic-related adjustments, have similarly included updates through newsletters, emails to families, and social media posts.

3. Volume of Communication

While the complaint alleges that the District “flooded” the community with messages, the volume of communication was consistent with the District’s standard practice for engaging its community on critical issues.

- The District’s commitment to transparency necessitates sharing timely and comprehensive information with families and residents.
- This level of outreach mirrors the District’s efforts for other initiatives and does not indicate any deviation from customary practices.

Given these factors, the District asserts that there has been no violation of **RCW 42.17A.555**, as no public resources were used to support the ballot measure in the manner described.

We respectfully request that this complaint be dismissed. Please feel free to reach out with any further questions or if clarification is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Israel Vela". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Israel Vela
Superintendent
israel.vela@kent.k12.wa.us

Sent via email to: pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov / US Mail to follow

cc: Curtis Leonard, Legal Counsel
Wade Barringer, Deputy Superintendent
Carolyn Currie, Assistant to the Superintendent