



**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: pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov • Website: www.pdcc.wa.gov

August 22, 2018

Delivered electronically to "steeleatty@aol.com"

Subject: PDC Case 36969

Dear George Steele:

Below is a copy of an electronic letter sent to Sean Valley concerning a complaint filed with the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC).

As noted below to Sean Valley, the PDC will not be conducting a more formal investigation into these allegations or taking further enforcement action in this matter.

If you have questions, you may contact Micaiah Ragins at 1-360-586-4555 toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at micaiah.ragins@pdcc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s _____
Micaiah Ragins
Compliance Coordinator

Endorsed by,

/s _____
Barbara Sandahl
Deputy Director
For Peter Lavallee
Executive Director



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August 22, 2018

Delivered electronically to "sean.valley@gmail.com"

Subject: Complaint regarding George Steele, PDC Case 36969

Dear Sean W. Valley:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) has completed its initial review of the complaint you filed on June 17, 2018. Your complaint alleged that George Steele may have violated RCW 42.17A.335 by implying false incumbency in the 2018 election campaign.

PDC staff reviewed your allegations, and as a result of staff's initial review, we found the following:

- George Steele included his name followed by the words "District Court Judge", but did not include an express statement, such as by using "for" or "elect", that he was seeking the office of District Court Judge for Mason County.
- In order to find that a person has violated RCW 42.17A.335(1)(b) by making a false statement of incumbency, staff must prove that the statement constituted libel or defamation. The Legislature has specifically indicated in RCW 42.17A.335(3) that it is not a violation for a candidate or candidate's agent to falsely represent that the candidate is the incumbent for the office sought because a candidate cannot defame himself or herself.
- The following statement has been removed from WAC 390-18-040(6) and is therefore not enforceable: "Stating the office sought (e.g., "mayor") by a candidate in a political advertisement without expressly stating the candidate is seeking election to the office (e.g., "for mayor"; "Elect Smith Mayor") represents that the candidate presently holds that office."

Based on these initial findings, staff has determined that in this instance, the implication of false incumbency does not support a finding of a material violation warranting further investigation.

The PDC has closed the matter, and will not be conducting a more formal investigation into your complaint or pursuing further enforcement action in this case.

If you have questions, you may contact Micaiah Ragins at 1-360-586-4555 toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at micaiah.ragins@pdc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s_____

Micaiah Ragins
Compliance Coordinator

Endorsed by,

/s _____
Barbara Sandahl
Deputy Director
For Peter Lavallee
Executive Director

cc: George Steele