

Respondent Name

Newcastle Watchdogs

Complainant Name

Allen Dauterman

Complaint Description

[Allen Dauterman](#) (Fri, 18 Sep 2020 at 2:51 PM)

To whom it may Concern,

It has come to my attention that a politically oriented group of Newcastle WA residents named **Newcastle Watchdog (NWD)** or **Newcastle Watchdogs (NWD)** appears to have been in violation of Washington State's campaign finance laws (**RCW 42.17A**) since mid-2019 with the following violations of **RCW 42.17A.205**, **RCW 42.17A.225**, and **RCW 42.17A.235**:

Failure to register a Political Committee with the PDC in 2019

The NWD group, whose founder and chairperson Nola Coston, chose to flout and ignore the law with the failure to file a statement of organization with the commission within two weeks after the date the NWD first had the expectation of receiving contributions or making expenditures in any election campaign. NWD violations commenced when NWD either used contributions and/or expenditures to directly support 2019 Newcastle City Council Candidate Tom Griffin.

In preparation to support Candidate Tom Griffin, NWD appears to have procured the services of the Glen Morgan political committee **We The Governed (WTG)** to professionally produce video content (exhibit C) for NWD specific use to support Candidate Tom Griffin. Evidence of this direct support for Candidate Tom Griffin took form in two known instances;

- NWD provided the WTG video YouTube URL link exclusively to the Tom Griffin Campaign when printed on the October 2019 Friends of Tom Griffin campaign mailer (Exhibit A).
- NWD provided Candidate Tom Griffin with printed material to be packaged with Tom Griffin Campaign material for distribution. The printed NWD flier (exhibit B-1) with the WTG video YouTube URL link was bound with a rubber band to the Tom Griffin Campaign flier (exhibit B-2). When combined, both fliers became Tom Griffin Campaign material. Tom Griffin personally hand delivered the NWD flier bound with the Tom Griffin Campaign flier as a single package to businesses, individuals, and thousands of homes in Newcastle.

2. Failure to report contributions and/or expenses with the PDC in 2019

NWD failed to disclose contributions and/or expenditures associated with their support to Candidate Tom Griffin, and associated with additional NWD campaign material. At a minimum, NWD contributions and/or expenditures consisted of the following:

- NWD compensation to WTG who professionally produced the video for specific use by NWD. If the WTG video was procured at no cost to NWD, then NWD was obligated to report the video as an in-kind contribution at its fair market value, which could range from \$1,500 to \$15,000 per minute, or \$16,500 to \$165,000 for an eleven minute professionally produced video. The professional grade video was clearly produced at a cost to WTG, and the video was clearly procured by NWD with the intent to specifically support Candidate Tom Griffin. Exhibits A & B clearly demonstrate a specific intent to support a Candidate.
- Exhibit B-1 NWD paper flier is an unreported NWD publishing expense intended to support Candidate Tom Griffin.
- NWD engaged WTG to professionally produce a digital publication (Exhibit D). While this digital publication was not directly used to support Candidate Tom Griffin, it is NWD committee material. NWD failed to disclose compensation or in-kind contribution details associated with procuring the digital publication.

Failure to register a Continuing Political Committee with the PDC in 2020

NWD continued to flout and ignore the law by electing to hide spending and ignore Continuing Political Committee requirements of filing a statement of organization with the commission within two weeks after the date the NWD first has the expectation of receiving contributions or making expenditures in any ballot proposition.

NWD violations resumed in 2020 when NWD continued acting as a Continuing Political Committee with the following actions;

- Initiated a campaign to collect petition signatures to place Newcastle Referendum No. 2 on the 2020 General Election ballot.
- Solicited in-kind contributions from Newcastle residents for printing costs and USPS postage to mail a signed referendum petition.
- Made multiple expenditures in support of a referendum proposition and ballot proposition.
- Continued exclusive use of the 2019 WTG video, providing additional value to NWD as a continuing political committee through their use in 2020 to answer questions for the NWD, to promote the NWD group, and to promote referendum lobbying efforts (Exhibit I)

4. Failure to report contributions and/or expenses with the PDC in 2020

NWD failed to disclose contributions and/or expenditures associated with their support of a referendum proposition and ballot proposition. At a minimum, NWD contributions and/or expenditures consisted of the following:

- Expenses associated with publishing a referendum petition flier requesting signatures (Exhibit G).
- Expenses associated with the newcastlewatchdogs.com domain name registration and URL address (Exhibit G).
- Expenses associated with website hosing (Exhibit E & F).
- Expenses associated with referendum campaign buttons (Exhibit H).

Please note there are two NWD mailing addresses identified in the attached exhibits, and three email addresses used by Nola Coston.

What impact does the alleged violation(s) have on the public?

To quote the very first statement in the Declaration of Policy for the Campaign Disclosure and Contribution public policy; “That political campaign and lobbying contributions and expenditures be fully disclosed to the public and that secrecy is to be avoided.”

Newcastle residents have a right to know when fellow residents and neighbors purporting to be government watchdogs are secretly avoiding the same law they expect others to follow. Newcastle residents have the right to know what funds are being used (in-kind or otherwise) to support a Candidate for Newcastle City Council and a City of Newcastle referendum and ballot proposition. It is particularly problematic when these Newcastle residents who know the law are so willing to overtly and maliciously break that same law in a secretive and covert manner to avoid transparency while demanding transparency from the City and politically active Newcastle residents.

List of attached evidence or contact information where evidence may be found

Exhibit A: Tom Griffin Campaign mailer printed with a YouTube URL link to the WTG video, a link exclusively provided by NWD. This mailer demonstrates NDW’s specific support to Candidate Tom Griffin.

Exhibit B: B-1 printed flier published by NWD to specifically support Candidate Tom Griffin, and B-2 printed flier published by Tom Griffin Campaign. Both fliers were bound together with a rubber band, and when combined, both fliers became Tom Griffin Campaign material. Tom Griffin personally hand delivered both fliers to the majority of Newcastle homes and business. The NDW flier contained within the Tom Griffin Campaign packet includes a printed YouTube URL link to the WTG video procured by NWD.

Exhibit C: “City of Newcastle – an unsustainable financial path” information about the WTG professionally produced video, a video procured exclusively by the NWD to directly support Candidate Tom Griffin.

Exhibit D: “Is the City of Newcastle on an Unsustainable Financial Path?” WTG professionally prepared digital publication procured by the NWD for their own campaign purposes.

Exhibit E: June 2020 “Newcastle Utility Tax - Let the People Vote” Email from NWD Nola soliciting Newcastle residents to make in-kind printing and USPS postage donations by printing and mailing a referendum petition. The email includes potential evidence of website hosting expenses.

Exhibit F: June 2020 “Your Help is Really Needed!” Email from NWD Nola Coston soliciting Newcastle residents to make in-kind printing and USPS postage donations by printing and mailing a referendum petition. The email includes potential evidence of website hosting expenses.

Exhibit G: June 2020 “Newcastle City Residents Are Fired Up!” flier from NWD Nola Coston soliciting Newcastle residents to make in-kind printing and USPS postage donations by printing and mailing a referendum petition. Printed flier was published by NWD and distributed to Newcastle residents and businesses. The flier also contains evidence of domain name registration and URL address expenses.

Exhibit H: September 2020 Facebook post offering campaign pins to the public, evidence of expenses associated with manufacturing campaign pins.

Exhibit I: January 2020 emails from NWD Nola Coston demonstrating NWD support of a proposed referendum proposition prior to circulation of signatures and continued exclusive use of the 2019 WTG video demonstrating value to NWD.

Please note there are two NWD mailing addresses identified in the attached exhibits, and three email addresses used by Nola Coston.

List of potential witnesses with contact information to reach them

Tom and Patti Magers - email holeinuno@outlook.com

Allen Dauterman - email allendauterman@gmail.com

Certification (Complainant)

I certify (or declare) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that information provided with this complaint is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.