

To whom it may concern,

It has come to my attention that the Thurston County Assessor Steven Drew has, once again, violated Washington State's campaign finance laws (RCW 42.17A). The details are as follows:

- 1) Illegal coerced solicitation of campaign contributions from government employees who work under his administration. These illegal solicitations were sometimes successful in extracting campaign cash from employees who feared for their career and job prospects if they failed to comply with the implied threats and solicitations (Violation of RCW 42.17A.565)**

For PDC staff background on this case, Thurston County Assessor Steven Drew has violated this EXACT law in the past. The former head of the Human Resources Department at Thurston County filed the last complaint on his legal violations at the time. The PDC investigated him for these violations in the past (See **PDC Enforcement Case #13-014**). I have attached the documentation regarding the final settlement and \$300 fine imposed by the PDC at that time. Bear in mind, **the only difference between that case and this current violation is that Steven Drew was attempting to solicit funds for Democrat County Commissioner Candidate Sandra Romero at the time, and this time Steven Drew is illegally (and successfully) soliciting funds for his own personal campaign for office.** Many employees have expressed concerns on this subject and others from this office repeatedly over the years, and with some quitting to remove themselves from a hostile work environment, it appears to be long past time to expose the truth in this dark corner of Thurston County.

For clarity's sake, I recognize that it is beyond the scope of the Public Disclosure Commission to address complaints about hostile work environments, possible extortion of funds from government staff for non-campaign related issues, or complaints about Assessor Steven Drew never being in the office or doing his job. THOSE types of complaints must be addressed, if they are addressed at all, from other government entities or in other legal settings. I will avoid discussing those subjects in this complaint.

I recognize that the PDC staff will be required to interview various employees at the Thurston County Assessor's office to verify the facts referenced in this allegation. However, I will start with a direct quote from an email I recently received from one of these recent employees to give you a sense of the situation I am describing here (Please note, only two details are censored in this quote – both are personal phone numbers that I felt would not be appropriate to make public in this complaint and which the PDC staff can obtain from me via phone if they feel it is relevant):

Dear Mr. Morgan:

I was an exempt, at will employee working in the Thurston County Assessor's office from July 1, 2014 until my last official day of September 30, 2022. I worked as Chief Deputy Assessor for the elected Assessor Steven Drew.

During my employment Mr. Drew solicited me for campaign contributions each and every of the three election cycles of my tenure. I begrudgingly complied each time. The incident described below is for this last election cycle.

On or about February 22, 2022 Mr. Drew contacted me from his personal phone (206) 999-XXXX (Censored by Glen Morgan for privacy reasons) to my personal phone (816) XXX –

XXXX (Censored by Glen Morgan for privacy reasons) in the evening. I was at home at the time, and I have no idea where Mr. Drew would have been. He requested \$250.00, which I agreed to. Then on or about February 24, 2022 he drove to the County Court House and had me meet him outside Building 1. He was in his car and I handed him the check. He deposited the check on February 28, 2022.

He made no specific direct requests for additional money, but there were pseudo requests. On the Primary Election Day August 2, 2022 he made one of his rare appearances to the office. Sitting across from me, in my office in the Assessment Department, he stated he may need additional funds but was going to attempt to collect it from other groups.

Nothing more was stated until on or about September 15th, he called me from his cell phone to my county's desk phone (360) 867-2230 (where I was sitting at the time). Again, he made the same mantra of he may need additional funds but would look elsewhere. At this point, I was so disgusted with working for him on several levels, I submitted my resignation on September 19th, and left the office never to return!

I am unsure if Mr. Drew is allowed to solicit funds from exempt employees. Naturally, you may wonder why did I give him the funds? The answer is, it felt like a "shakedown". While it was not an excessive amount of money, I just considered it a form of required "tribute" to a political boss system. Additionally, I felt I had to acquiesce to this demand to either keep my job or at least keep harassment to a minimum. I know of one individual who refused to pay this tribute, and according to this individual, Mr. Drew escalated his harassment.

I am completely disgusted by these demands and his other behavior. Since my employment, together with my fellow merit employees in the Thurston County Assessor's Office, we have been a constant leader in performance measurements, as compared to other counties in the state. It has always been my goal to be a state leader in Assessment quality, and a review of my results in this state as well as other states proves I have always achieved this outcome. To me, when I arrived, the Thurston County Assessor's Office would have been considered mediocre at best. One would think a normal, rational politician would be happy with these measurable results, but his behavior indicates either a lack of understanding of our industry, a lack of character or some sort of personality disorder.

Perhaps this is speculation on my part, it would appear that to Mr. Drew, the payment of these shakedowns is proof of loyalty to him, and/or even an endorsement of his candidacy. If he portrays this to be the case, it would be a bald-faced lie.

Respectfully

(Mike Brooks)

When I followed up with this employee, after discussing the matter with him further, it appears, unfortunately, that this is just the tip of the iceberg, with a pattern of behavior that has transpired at the Thurston County Assessors' office over many years and campaign cycles.

Obviously, due to statute of limitations, PDC staff can't enforce the violations committed by Thurston County Assessor Steven Drew immediately after his last PDC fine and investigation, but the recent violations are certainly enough to investigate and pursue.

It is particularly egregious, I believe to abuse a power position of trust and use threats (implied or explicit) to extort and extract cash from employees who work for you. I hope the PDC takes this case seriously, and based on past experience with investigations into Steven Drew's behavior, that the PDC recognize once this complaint is public it appears almost certain that Steven Drew will attempt to contact other current and past employees in an effort to suppress or modify their testimony.

2) Misuse of public resources for personal gain and to assist in personal political campaign (Violation of RCW 42.17A.555)

This is another campaign finance law that Thurston County Assessor Steven Drew has violated in the past (See **PDC Enforcement Case #13-014**). The continuing pattern of behavior has not changed substantially. Based on the witness statement detailed in the previous allegation, It appears that Steven Drew was willing to use Thurston County government resources to solicit funds from employees as well as to make a rare appearance on county property to pick up checks coerced from his employees. Additionally calling his employees on their work phones during working hours to discuss how they will fund his political campaigns is a serious misuse of public resources to assist a political campaign.

Steven Drew has violated the law in this manner before, and based on employee testimony, it appears he continues to do so now.

However, the violations appear to have escalated in 2022 with a recent misuse of public resources to convert a regular property assessment value change card mailed to property owners by the Thurston County Assessor's office every year into a thinly disguised piece of carefully timed political self-promotion. This upgraded document, instead of being the traditional 3x5 postcard used over the past few decades was turned into a much more expensive full color mailer which included an extensive "PSA" style three paragraph statement from Steven Drew with about the same self-promotion as his personal statement in the Washington State Voter's Guide. I have attached a sample copy of this for reference.

Reportedly, this exceeded the original budget for the property mailer by over \$25,000 because it had never been done before, and it was timed to be mailed to have maximum impact on the election cycle. This appears to be a clear violation of RCW 42.17A.555 once again by Steven Drew who appears to view not just the employees of the Thurston County Assessor's office as his personal campaign piggy bank, but also the taxpayer funds provided so generously to support the office he claims to represent.

3) Misuse of Public Service Announcements to promote political campaign during an election year. (Violation of RCW 42.17A.575 see WAC 390-05-525)

As referenced in the above details associated with Steven Drew's violation of RCW 42.17A.555, it appears that the expensive, unprecedented mailer distributed by the Thurston County Assessor's office on the taxpayer's dime was also an explicit violation of RCW 42.17A.575 specifically. To the best of my knowledge this is the first time Steven Drew has openly violated this specific statute, but I could be wrong about this assumption. It might be possible he has violated this and many other laws before. However, at least this violation was not a repeat of **PDC Enforcement Case #13-014**.

This is not a common violation I have found in the past, but it is also a blatant violation. I wish to point out that even if this new expensive method of communicating Property Value Change Notices to the hundreds of thousands of property owners in Thurston County is to become the standard method in the future by the Thurston County Assessor's office, the time to do this is during a non-campaign year. It

does appear this mailer would fall under the definition of a PSA (**see WAC 390-05-525**), but it was a clear violation of this statute to abuse the taxpayer funds in this manner at this time. This was a simple law to avoid violating, and it took willful effort and total disregard for the law to do so. This is particularly true in light of the other avoidable and repeated violations of statute committed by Steven Drew in this case.

Most complaints I have found in past enforcement cases on this matter have involved school districts and some port district complaints regarding their PSA announcements at Sea Tac Airport, for example. A key part of the fact pattern involves if there was something unusual about a PSA during THIS campaign season compared to regular PSAs used in the course of regular business the rest of the time. The classic case is a school district not sending anything to parents or voters in their district until suddenly campaign season for the upcoming M&O levy is upon them and they suddenly start expending large sums of public dollars to send "PSAs" to local voters.

A pattern of lawbreaking and misuse of elitism and political connections

Most of us believe the law should be applied equally to everyone in every case. This may be a naïve expectation, but it is one worth aspiring to in most cases, even in cases like this before the Public Disclosure Commission. Steven Drew and his wife, Kathleen Drew view themselves as political insiders who can't be touched. They have been appointed to various boards and positions in recent years. Steven Drew was appointed by Inslee to the SPSCC board by Governor Inslee. It appears this belief that he is a political insider with elite connections to the highest political positions in the state would exempt him from following the same laws that the rest of us peons are expected to follow rigorously.

I urge the PDC staff and board to not allow themselves to be intimidated by political connections, threats, or other forms of intimidation just like the Thurston County Assessor's staff appear to be suffering under for many years now. The purpose of the PDC is to enforce the law equally, and to not allow political elites to capture the process to ensure the law does not apply to them.

There is a pattern of behavior documented in this case that will not change without significant consequences to the people who continue to flagrantly violate it when they believe they can escape any significant consequences. **Clearly, the previous \$300 fine in PDC Enforcement Case #13-014 was not taken seriously, and the identical (and now additional) violations continued, apparently without pause.** No public employees should be subject to this type of mental abuse or extortion for campaign cash by a sitting elected official who has the power to abuse, harass or threaten them. Even in Washington State, this should not be acceptable behavior for anyone.

Please feel free to contact me for the personal phone number of the primary whistleblower in this matter, and I can probably provide you with additional contact information for other witnesses in this matter.

Best Regards,

Glen Morgan