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AG FILES CAMPAIGN FINANCE COMPLAINT AGAINST PORT OF TACOMA OFFICIALS, EDB, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



(<http://www.atg.wa.gov/print/12332>)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Aug 15 2016

OLYMPIA — The Attorney General’s Office today announced the filing of a complaint in Pierce County Superior Court alleging campaign finance violations by Port of Tacoma officials, the Economic Development Board of Tacoma-Pierce County (“the EDB”), and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce (“the Chamber”).

The complaint alleges that Port officials violated RCW 42.17A.555 by using public funds and facilities to litigate against two ballot propositions promoted by the group “Save Tacoma Water.” The AGO alleges that the EDB and the Chamber violated RCW 42.17A.255 by failing to disclose independent expenditures they made opposing the propositions in the same lawsuit.

“Washington’s campaign disclosure laws demand transparency and accountability,” Attorney General Bob Ferguson said. “Washington elections, including the financial forces that drive them, will take place in the clear light of day.”

In June 2016, the Attorney General’s Office received a Citizen Action Notice alleging violations of the state’s public disclosure laws by Port officials, the EDB and the Chamber. The AGO referred the matter to the state Public Disclosure Commission for possible investigation and a recommendation. Following PDC staff review and recommendation, on Aug. 8, 2016, the commission voted to recommend no further legal action.

Nevertheless, the Attorney General’s Office believes that the actions of the Port officials were

prohibited by RCW 42.17A.555 and that the EDB and the Chamber were obligated under RCW 42.17A.255 to disclose the amount of money they spent opposing the propositions.

The AGO's complaint alleges that through July 21, 2016, the Port officials improperly expended approximately \$45,000 in litigation costs to oppose the ballot propositions. The complaint further alleges that the EDB and the Chamber each failed to disclose approximately \$10,000 spent in litigation costs opposing the ballot propositions. The state seeks penalties and injunctive relief.

The defendants will have 20 days from the date they are served to respond to the state's complaint.

A copy of the complaint can be found here (http://agportal-s3bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploadedfiles/Another/News/Press_Releases/Complaint-20160815.pdf).

The Attorney General's Office enforces the state's campaign finance disclosure law to ensure free, open, and fair elections in Washington.

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