Outreach plan for F-1 financial affairs disclosure

Public Disclosure Commission

How we got here

- Washington state law has required the commission to attempt to make available via the website the public records submitted to it.
- F-1s remain the only required reporting that is not readily available to the public online.
- Many other states already make financial disclosures accessible and searchable online.
- In 2018, the commission decided to move forward with making the F-1s more readily available. Notice was sent to filers. Some had concerns, which prompted a pause.
- The Legislature this year amended HB 1195 to include a prohibition against the agency posting F-1s on the website. Gov. Inslee vetoed that section of the bill to allow the PDC to move forward with consideration of best approaches.

Goals

- To gauge support for online accessibility of F-1 information
- To identify areas for possible regulatory reform
- To tap user experience for building new financial affairs reporting system

Audiences

- Candidates and elected and appointed officials who file F-1s
- General public, media and other users of PDC information
- Good government and campaign finance reform organizations with expertise in this area

Approach

- A survey provides a customer-focused starting point for this discussion
- Survey data provides some guidelines:
  - Aim for a high response rate for the broadest, most representative results.
  - Shorter surveys yield the biggest sample sizes
  - Abandon rates increase up to 20 percent for surveys that take longer than 7-8 minutes to complete.
  - A 7-minute survey is on average 14-16 questions.
  - The incremental value of each question should be worth the possible drop in response rates.

Messaging

Invitation to survey will include:

- Background about F-1 requirement, its origin in Initiative 276 and its current state
- Commission’s work to make disclosure more manageable and meaningful, as reflected in HB 1195 and other efforts
- Legislative and gubernatorial action on the issue of online accessibility

Survey plan

- Ask audiences about information in the F-1 as a means to gauge sensitivities and priorities
- Use replies to determine:
  - If there are areas where public interests and privacy interests intersect to inform decisions on access
  - What information filers are providing that is of little use to the public in considering conflicts of interest
  - What information the public finds most helpful and may warrant additional disclosure

Survey questions

- Ask survey respondents whether they are interested in/concerned about information on:
  - Who has to file
  - Who has filed
  - Summary by office (e.g. how many state legislators own stock in Company A)
  - A filer's general financial picture
  - Details of a filer's financial information:
    - Compensation
    - Real estate
    - Assets
    - Debt
    - Supplemental information
  - Entire F-1 report

Survey questions

- For each area, we will ask respondents to rank the following on a scale of 1 to 5:
  - Public interest
  - Privacy interest
  - Access
    - Would you support more disclosure if requesters were required to provide an email address?

Survey questions

- Are you interested in providing more input? We will collect contact info for people for a possible deeper dive.
- Are you interested in participating as part of the PDC project team building a new electronic filing system?
- Anything else you want to tell us?

Schedule

- Release survey at beginning of June
- Collect responses for three weeks
- Present results to commission June 27
- Staff makes recommendations regarding possible regulatory reform at July regular commission meeting
- Commission decides next steps on F-1 accessibility and regulatory reform