

PDC Public Comment - School Elections

External Email

Good morning, school elections are a vital and important part of our state system. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on possible future updates to PDC rules relating to school elections.

In today's media climate citizens are often more **mis**informed than knowledgeable about the facts around issues. Social media has ruined public discourse, computer algorithms routinely push incorrect information to users to gain views and drive ad revenue, the truth is often hard to find. Furthermore, in smaller markets the local newspapers are pretty much gone, local radio reaches literally a few thousand folks and this puts more pressure and stress on school districts to fill the media and information gap and cut through the clutter with factual school news and information.

The job of school communicators has become dramatically harder and current PDC rules make it even more challenging. If the goal is for government entities to be transparent, factual and to inform the citizenry on election issues we need more options and leeway for communicating to constituents, not less. In the current PDC rules, school districts get the opportunity to distribute one informational printed mailer to households in the school district. Any marketer will tell you sending one mailer will not be successful in educating the public. Given the incredibly fractured state of traditional local media and digital platforms, school districts need far more opportunity to properly educate the public on elections.

In the last Longview capital projects and technology levy election (which was held in April 2022) about 33 percent of registered voters actually voted. Looking at this in the reverse, about 67 percent of registered voters could not be bothered to vote – is that what we want? Further, about 40 percent of actual voters are historically citizens over the age of 60. Citizens over the age of 60 are not on social media nor school web sites with much regularity, so the only way we can reach them is through more traditional marketing channels. At the same time, a huge percentage of younger age voters are spread across so many social media channels it is hard to count. And to make things that much harder, sites like Facebook restrict the amount of views school posts receive because they want you to pay to “boost” posts. Districts do not fund, nor staff, communication departments to take on these challenges.

In conclusion, if the goal is for government funded entities to educate the public on important issues that impact families, school districts should be given the latitude to provide MORE information across traditional and digital media channels, with significant frequency, so the goal of better educating folks can be met. At the same time, districts should be held accountable for providing factual, non-biased, objective (non-advocacy) information.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Respectfully,

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“Literacy is the most important thing we do!”