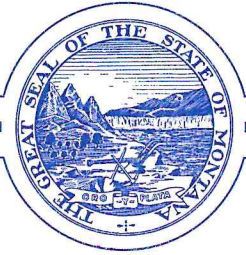


COMMISSIONER OF
POLITICAL PRACTICES



STATE OF MONTANA

CHRIS J. GALLUS
COMMISSIONER
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September 14, 2023

Charles Jeffrey Peterson Jr.
1322 RD 261
Glendive, MT 59330

Subject: Complaints received September 6, 2023; Peterson Jr. v. GPS Advocates, COPP-2023-CFP-014

Charles,

This letter acknowledges the receipt of your formal complaints, received by this Office via U.S. Mail on September 6, 2023. Each signed and certified complaint alleges specific violations of Montana election law under my jurisdiction as Commissioner of Political Practices, and each appears to conform to the basic requirements of 44.11.106 ARM. For those reasons, I am accepting them as a Campaign Finance and Practices (CFP) Complaint, despite being filed on Lobbying complaint forms. Your complaint otherwise fully complies with the aforementioned Rule. Because each complaint contains common issues and alleged violators I am combining them into one (1) individual matter, as named above.

As a point of clarification, while your complainant presents alleged violations of political committee registration and disclosure requirements under MCA §13-1-101, this statute simply provides formal definitions for certain terms utilized in Montana election law. The relevant statutes for these allegations are actually MCA §§ 13-37-201 (committee registration), 226 (time for filing finance reports), and 229 (the disclosure of contributions received and expenditures made). Similarly, your complainant presents allegations of bribery and corrupt influence under MCA §45-7-101, over which I am not provided proper jurisdiction absent a connection to MCA Title 13, Chapter 35. In this case the alleged activity or actions described with this allegation may fall under my jurisdiction over election law under Title 13, Chapter 35, potentially including MCA §§ 13-35-214, 218 and 220.

Pursuant to the established process, a letter and copy of the complaint is being sent to the named respondents, requesting that they provide a written response to this office and retain pertinent records pending further investigation of this matter.

I will review any additional materials relevant to this complaint for any deficiencies pursuant to 44.11.106 ARM, law, and prior relevant COPP rulings, and reserve the right to dismiss the complaint upon this initial inquiry. If this occurs, I will notify you and provide a basis for the dismissal. Alternatively, upon this further review, I may determine that a formal investigation is warranted. If an

investigation is conducted, a summary of facts and statement of findings will be prepared, and a copy will be sent to you. This generally involves a more extensive and time-consuming process, during which you may contact us for a status update. If violations are determined during this process, they are typically referred to the local county attorney. The local county attorney then determines whether they will prosecute the matter or refer it back to me. If returned to me, I will either work with the responding party to settle the matter or prosecute it within their local jurisdiction in district court.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris J. Gallus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Chris Gallus
Commissioner of Political Practices