

June 4, 2026

Commissioner Chris J. Gallus
Commissioner of Political Practices
1209 Eighth Avenue
PO Box 202401
Helena, MT 59620-2401

Re: *Complaint received May 11, 2026; Fitzpatrick v. Schreiber, COPP-2026-CFP-016*

Commissioner Gallus,

Artificial intelligence was not used to generate the images or audio referenced in this complaint. The video advertisement at issue is a thirty-second political video that makes a straightforward political argument: that Barack Obama’s documented “bitter clingers” sentiment has been echoed by John Fitzpatrick, and that both insult rural Montana. The ad does not depict the two men meeting, conversing, or otherwise interacting. It places their separately sourced images in a compositional frame to make a rhetorical point, a technique as old as political advertising itself.

The production elements are as follows. The still image of Barack Obama is sourced from a New Yorker magazine editorial photograph (newyorker.com, November 28, 2016). The audio accompanying that image is Obama’s own voice taken from the publicly available recording of his 2008 “bitter clingers” remarks — one of the most documented and authenticated political statements in modern American history. No AI was used to generate, synthesize, or alter Obama’s voice or likeness. The still image of John Fitzpatrick used in the advertisement is his official Montana Legislature roster photograph, published and archived by the State of Montana at archive.legmt.gov. The video and audio of John Fitzpatrick are drawn from official Montana House floor footage, which was posted to a public X (Twitter) account. This is government-recorded video of a public official conducting public business, and among the most legitimate and unimpeachable sources available for political commentary about a candidate for office. Fitzpatrick’s audio was slowed solely for timing and synchronization purposes; his voice was not synthesized, altered, or generated by any artificial intelligence tool.

The methodology employed in producing this advertisement encompasses sourcing real photographs and real audio, compositing them against a graphic design background, applying color treatment, and animating transitions. These are standard digital video production techniques that have been utilized and accepted as industry standard for many decades. Every element of this advertisement depicts or conveys something that is real and true: Obama said what he said, Fitzpatrick said what he said, and the political argument connecting those statements is the protected speech of the respondent.

The complaint alleges that the advertisement constitutes an “AI deepfake.” This characterization is categorically false. A deepfake is a fabrication — a synthetically generated or algorithmically manipulated image or audio designed to make a person appear to say or do something they did not say or do. No element of this advertisement meets that definition. Obama’s quote is verbatim and historically documented. Fitzpatrick’s image and voice are his own, recorded in a real government proceeding. The complainant does not allege that any statement attributed to him is false, because no false statement is made. He is depicted saying what he actually said.

The complaint makes two specific factual allegations, both of which are demonstrably false. First, the complainant states: “I have never been photographed with Obama.” This is true — and entirely irrelevant. The advertisement does not depict John Fitzpatrick with Barack Obama. It does not claim they met, spoke, or were ever in the same room. The two men appear in separate frames, in separate images, sourced separately, to illustrate a political argument about shared sentiment. Any viewer of ordinary intelligence understands that a political advertisement juxtaposing two public figures is making a rhetorical argument, not a factual claim about physical proximity. The complainant is arguing against something the advertisement never asserts. Second, the complainant states that “the photo of me has been AI altered to reduce its visual appeal.” This allegation is false in its entirety. The still photograph of John Fitzpatrick used in the advertisement is his own official Montana Legislature roster photograph, taken by the state, published by the state, and archived by the state at archive.legmt.gov. The respondent did not select an unflattering image. The respondent used the most official, neutral, and dignified representation of the complainant that exists. No artificial intelligence was used to alter his appearance in any respect.

This advertisement uses real images, real voices, real quotes, and real footage to make a real political argument. The complaint should be dismissed.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Schreiber
P.O. Box 252
Avon, MT 59713

APPENDIX: Production Sources and Modifications

Obama Visual and Audio

Visual: Editorial photograph sourced from The New Yorker, November 28, 2016. No modifications beyond resizing and color treatment for compositional consistency.

Audio: Barack Obama’s 2008 “bitter clingers” remarks. Publicly available recording. No modification, synthesis, or AI processing of any kind. Verbatim quote: “They get bitter and cling to guns or religion.”

Reference (audio): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZWaxjiQyFk>

Reference (visual): <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/28/obama-reckons-with-a-trump-presidency>

Fitzpatrick Visual and Audio

Visual (still): Official Montana Legislature roster photograph of John Fitzpatrick, published and archived by the State of Montana: <https://archive.legmt.gov/legislator-information/roster/individual/7627.html>

Visual (video): Official Montana House floor footage posted to a public X (Twitter) account by user @blissllew. This is government-recorded video of a public official in the conduct of his official duties.

Audio: John Fitzpatrick’s own voice, extracted from the official House floor footage. Playback speed was reduced solely to synchronize the audio with the abbreviated on-screen quote. No AI voice synthesis, cloning, or generation of any kind was employed.

Reference: <https://x.com/blissllew/status/1931411686348464636>

Summary of All Modifications Applied

Obama image: Resized; color treatment applied for compositional consistency.

Fitzpatrick still image: Official roster photograph; color treatment applied.

Fitzpatrick video: Isolated from official House floor footage; color treatment applied.

Fitzpatrick video: Playback speed reduced for timing synchronization only.

Composition: Standard graphic design background; animated tile/shatter transition effect. No generative AI tools used at any stage of production.