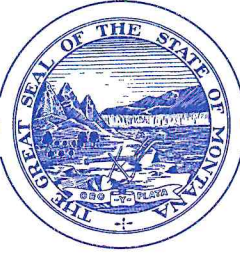


# COMMISSIONER OF POLITICAL PRACTICES



## STATE OF MONTANA

CHRIS J. GALLUS  
COMMISSIONER  
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June 16, 2026

Alexander Joseph "Joe" Dooling  
3855 Cedar Valley Rd.  
Helena, MT 59602

Subject: Complaint received June 15, 2026; *Dooling v. Bukacek*, COPP-2026-CFP-022

Joe,

This letter acknowledges receipt of the formal Campaign Finance and Practices (CFP) Complaint you submitted, hand-delivered to this office on June 15, 2026. The complaint alleges violations of Montana election law under my jurisdiction as Commissioner of Political Practices, and generally conforms to the basic requirements of 44.11.106 ARM. Although ARM 44.11.106 does require an address be provided for the named respondent, declining to accept a complaint submitted without one when it otherwise conforms to the basic requirements established in Rule would be a disservice to Montanans. COPP has previously accepted complaints where a potential respondent can be located even if contact information is not provided in the submitted complaint, and here agency staff have contact information for the named respondent via public candidate filings with both COPP and Montana's Secretary of State (SOS) office. Consequently, I will accept the complaint as filed.

When COPP addresses residency related complaints, we first determine whether a candidate can support their claim of residency. If residency is not adequately supported based on the facts presented, COPP then determines if the candidate acted intentionally when they filed their declaration and oath. If COPP determines the statute was knowingly violated, I can file an action and prosecute a claim for violation of Montana Code Annotated (MCA) § 13-35-207, which is a misdemeanor. Individuals may contest a candidate's nomination or election to public office, however such a challenge must be filed "Five days or less after a candidate has been certified as nominated" and directly "in the district court of the county in which the certificate, declaration, or acceptance of the person's nomination as a candidate for the office to which the person is declared nominated or elected is filed or in which the incumbent resides" rather than with COPP, pursuant to MCA's §§ 13-36-102 and 103. While a COPP decision may provide supporting evidence for an elector seeking a candidate's removal from the ballot in the district court, it is not within my authority to impose such a remedy myself.

Pursuant to the established process, a letter and copy of the complaint will be sent to the named respondent or their representative/s, requesting that they provide a written response to this office and retain pertinent records pending further investigation of this matter. MCA § 13-37-132.

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. MCA § 13-37-111. 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 found to have occurred and prosecution is determined to be justified, this matter will be referred to the local county attorney. MCA § 13-37-124. The local county attorney then determines whether they will prosecute the matter or refer it back to me.

Regards,



Chris J. Gallus  
Commissioner of Political Practices