

Respondent Name
Kent School District
Complainant Name
Joseph Riley
Complaint Description
<u>Joe Riley</u> reported via the portal <i>Sat, 12 Sep 2026 at 3:31 PM</i> Kent School District (KSD) is running a levy in November 2026. In the past week, I've seen two inappropriate communications from KSD regarding the levy. In the fact sheet [1] referenced in evidence, the PDC states that an <i>"objective and fair presentation of facts"</i> must avoid the following: 1. <i>"Overtly promotional or oppositional content (including...gratuitous photos that tend to provoke an emotional reaction...)"</i> 2. <i>"Statements purporting to describe the sponsoring agency's responsible fiscal management"</i> In evidence, I supplied two examples of inappropriate communication: 1. An email I received from KSD with the subject "KSD Levy and Cute Pic". The body of the email included a picture of students that attend the school and the text <i>"Also, for your trouble and time you took to open this email, here is a cute picture of some Chargers showing kindness and friendship on the playground!"</i> While this picture does not appear to directly reference the levy, providing a "cute picture" along with levy information appears to be intended to elicit an emotional response. While these "cute pics" are included in other emails from the school, this email was levy-specific and not part of a general newsletter. 2. In an attachment to the email above, and in the attached levy video, KSD makes multiple references to their own fiscal responsibility. They reference the district's audit history, mention the district's bond rating (specifically calling it <i>"...the top tier of all ratings..."</i> in the video), and mention that levy funds can only be used for purposes allowed by state law (which provides no meaningful information outside of purporting the district's fiscal responsibility).

As a reminder, Kent School District has been found to have violated PDC guidelines in each of their last three election cycles (November 2023, April 2024, November 2024). Included in those findings, the PDC specifically called out the two guidelines mentioned in the fact sheet, and Deputy Superintendent Wade Barringer was specifically warned about a video he created in 2024 titled "What happens if the levy fails?".

Sections of the law violated

RCW 29B.45.010

What impact does the alleged violation(s) have on the public?

KSD used public resources to support a ballot measure by inappropriately using emotional messaging and including statements describing the district's responsible fiscal management.

List of attached evidence or contact information where evidence can be found

[1] - <https://www.pdc.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/Fact.Sheets.pdf>
- PDC fact sheet guidance that describes what should be avoided for an "objective and fair presentation of the facts"

[2] - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLFY1O2GOdU> - KSD video about the upcoming levy

[3] - (Attached) Gmail - KSD Levy and Cute Pic.pdf - Email I received from KSD that talks about the levy and includes a "cute pic" of students.

[4] - (Attached) Levy Info KSD.docx - Attachment from email [3] above with information about the levy

[5] - (Attached) LevyVideoScreenshot.png - Screenshot from the levy video [2] that shows "Stewardship of Tax Dollars"

List potential witnesses with contact information to reach them

1. Deputy Superintendent Wade Barringer - wade.barringer@kent.k12.wa.us
2. Principal Nicole O'Brien - nicole.o'brien@kent.k12.wa.us

Certification (Complainant)

I certify (or declare) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that information provided with this complaint is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Voters will decide on November 3. Look for ballots in the mail after October 14. Return ballots by November 3.

What is a levy?

- The Educational Programs & Operations (EP&O) Levy is a local funding source that helps pay for programs, services, and staffing not fully funded by the state.
- This is a renewal of an existing levy, not a new levy. This is not a new tax.
- Levy funding is approved by local voters, stays in Kent School District, and must be renewed.

How are schools funded?

- State funding covers basic education, but it does not cover the full cost of operating schools and serving students.
- It's like paying for a house; the state provides the basic structure such as walls and roof, and the levy pays for furniture, utilities, insurance, and the fence to protect the children.

Why does the District need a levy?

- Last year, **state funding was approximately \$132.6 million below** what it costs to serve students and pay our staff.
- Levy funding helps bridge part of that gap.

Why does the levy pay for?

Staff Compensation

- Levy funding contributes to compensation costs of employees across the district, including:
- 11% of teacher costs
- 40% of building administrator and staff costs
- 26% of building maintenance staff costs
- 24% of other support staff costs
- 13% of central office administrative staff costs

Students

- Athletics and extracurricular activities (100%)
- Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.
- Dual Language programs. (100%)
- Highly Capable programs.

- Multilingual Education
- Student mental health supports.

Classrooms

- Additional staff and services beyond state-funded levels.
- Teacher training and professional learning.
- Textbooks and curriculum.
- Classroom materials and supplies.
- College and career readiness opportunities.

Schools

- School safety and security.
- Utilities and insurance costs.
- Bus Transportation

Accountability and Stewardship

- The district's finances are audited by the State Auditor's Office and OSPI.
- No findings in the last seven financial and accountability audits.
- Levy funds may only be used for purposes allowed by state law.
- The district maintains an Aa3 credit rating from Moodys, a nationally recognized credit rating organization.

Cost Information

- This is a four-year levy. The proposed levy would provide about \$6 -10 million more per year than the current levy.
- These funds would help pay for costs in staff compensation, utilities and insurance, support programs, and school operations that are not fully paid for by the state.
- Voters approve a fixed dollar amount—not a tax rate. If approved, Kent School District will collect a set amount each year.
- The estimated levy rates are:
 - 2028: \$1.95 per \$1,000 of assessed property value
 - 2029: \$1.93 per \$1,000
 - 2030: \$1.88 per \$1,000
 - 2031: \$1.84 per \$1,000
- If property values increase, the tax rate typically decreases, so the district collects only the voter-approved amount.

- The district cannot collect more than the amount authorized by voters.
- The **combined tax rates** per \$1,000 of assessed property value projected (next 4 years based on projected assessed property value growth) for the KSD Capital and Technology Levy, 2016 Bond, and EP&O levy are:
- \$3.07
 - o \$3.03
 - o \$2.71
 - o \$2.67

Combined Property Tax Rate Comparison with Neighboring Districts

- Auburn: \$4.85
- Highline: \$4.47
- Tahoma: \$3.97
- Renton: \$3.44
- **Kent: \$3.07**
- Federal Way: \$3.00
- Enumclaw: \$2.64

PDC Guidelines

The Washington Public Disclosure Commission provides election guidelines on what is allowed and not allowed in a public school system. **In general, please be aware:**

KSD EMPLOYEES CAN

- Respond to questions about the levy during work time by providing the facts.
Information is available at [Educational Programs & Operations Levy | Kent School District](#)
- Hold information meetings and present the facts about the levy.
- Encourage people to [register to vote](#) and encourage them to mail in their ballots by Nov. 3.
- Campaign for the levy on their own time.

Contact Information

Find more information and FAQs at [Educational Programs & Operations Levy | Kent School District](#)

Email questions to KSDLevy@kent.k12.wa.us

If a parent or community member wants to speak with someone: 253-373-7524.

Every dollar is managed
with **accountability**.

This is **verified** through
independent audits.



Moody's
Bond Rating
Aa3



Clean Audit History from
The State Auditor and OSPI
Last 7 Audits – No Findings

Stewardship of Tax Dollars



Levy dollars are part of the district's budget and subject to state requirements, accounting rules, audits, and oversight.



KSD Levy and Cute Pic

1 message

Fairwood Elementary <noreply@kent.k12.wa.us>

Wed, Sep 9, 2026 at 4:57 PM

Reply-To: noreply@kent.k12.wa.us

To: ...



Fairwood Elementary

Good Evening Charger Families,

At our PTSA General Membership meeting last night, I spoke briefly about the upcoming **Renewal Levy**. I felt it was important to share more detail and am providing information that provides some numbers and address some other FAQs. Please reach out with questions. Return ballots by November 3. Please consider connecting with a neighbor or community member with a conversation about the levy in hopes that we get a large turnout and an accurate representation of what our community wants.

I've attached a document with some details in case it is helpful.

If you don't have time to open it, here is a peek at some of the information I found useful...

Combined Property Tax Rate Comparison with Neighboring Districts

Auburn: \$4.85
Highline: \$4.47
Tahoma: \$3.97
Renton: \$3.44
Kent: \$3.07
Federal Way: \$3.00
Enumclaw: \$2.64

Also, for your trouble and time you took to open this email, here is a **cute picture** of some Chargers showing kindness and friendship on the playground!

Appreciatively,

Nicole O'Brien

Principal

Fairwood Elementary

nicole.o'brien@kent.k12.wa.us

253-373-7491 KSD Levy Info



powered by  apptegy

You're receiving this email on behalf of Fairwood Elementary. If you have any questions about how we process data you can view our [Privacy Policy](#).

2201 Brookwood Dr Suite 115, Little Rock, AR 72202

[Unsubscribe](#)