



Northwest Accountability Project
1037 NE 65th St. #331
Seattle, WA 98115

Commissioner Largent
400 N Main St
Colfax, WA, 99111

RE: Collective Bargaining/Open Public Meetings Act

14 August, 2017

Dear Commissioner Largent,

I am writing as the Executive Director of the Northwest Accountability Project, an organization that works to educate the public on individuals and organizations that attempt to bring an extreme agenda of hate and division to Washington and Oregon. You may have been provided information by the Olympia-based Freedom Foundation or their ally, the Washington Policy Center about adopting a resolution that would move bargaining with public sector unions in your jurisdiction into open public meetings. This resolution was adopted in Lincoln County and challenged by the Teamsters Union Local 690 at the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) as an unfair labor practice. **The Freedom Foundation has incorrectly claimed that these legal challenges to the resolution have been settled. This is unequivocally false as the legal status of this resolution is still unsettled.**

For context, The Freedom Foundation is largely funded by out of state billionaires and organizations, like the Wisconsin-based Bradley Foundation, that want to keep wages low, slash funding for education and eliminate paid sick days. Furthermore, despite their 501(c)(3) status, the Freedom Foundation has engaged in partisan political activity. Complaints have been filed against them with state and federal authorities.

The Washington Policy Center is part of the same out-of-state network and works closely with the Freedom Foundation.

When the resolution first passed in Lincoln County last fall, the Teamsters filed an unfair labor practice complaint (ULP) with PERC. The original complaint was dismissed by the commission; that is where the Freedom Foundation claims the story ends. However, once the union attempted to bargain under the new conditions, they filed an amended complaint with PERC. The Teamsters' complaint is still being considered by PERC with mediation coming in August that will likely be followed by a PERC hearing in the fall. **Until the commission delivers its final ruling, this resolution is not legally sound.** By passing it, Whitman County is wading into a legal grey area that could draw challenges through PERC or the courts that cost time and money.

Furthermore, this resolution targets only represented workers and no other contracts negotiated with Whitman County. This could also be the grounds for a ULP Complaint filed with PERC.

We appreciate your time and are available for further questions.

Sincerely,

Peter Starzynski, Executive Director
Northwest Accountability Project