



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION
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FPPC Expands AdWATCH to keep an eye on communications by public entities

Expanding on one of the most popular and successful programs created by the agency, the FPPC is now allowing the public to use FPPC AdWATCH to also report election-related communications made by public entities. This gives even more opportunity for people to use FPPC AdWATCH to make sure the public is getting the legally required disclosure on the ads they see and hear.

Anyone can upload a picture of a campaign sign or video or an election-related communication by a public entity on the FPPC AdWATCH page on the FPPC website. The site provides a link to upload pictures, signs, or videos. There is even a mobile version for your devices.

Under California's Political Reform Act, most committees must put disclaimers on campaign advertisements that identify the committee that paid for or authorized the communication. These rules also apply to communications from public entities when their activity meets the thresholds to qualify as a "committee." This happens when a state or local governmental agency pays \$1,000 or more in public moneys for a communication to the public and the communication expressly advocates the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate or the qualification, passage, or defeat of a clearly identified measure, or, taken as a whole and in context, unambiguously urges a particular result in an election. In addition, the communication qualifies towards the threshold if it is made at the behest of the affected candidate or committee.

"Expanding FPPC AdWATCH to allow reporting of information communicated by public entities about things like ballot measures will help the public get more accurate information and protect taxpayers by making sure their public officials are following the law," said FPPC Chair Richard C. Miadich. "The public can play a vital role in helping our Enforcement Division in making sure campaigns and public agencies are following the rules and ensuring a level playing field."

One of the portals allows you to upload a picture of a campaign billboard or sign or a communication from a public entity, either from a desktop, laptop or from their mobile device. Another portal accepts links to videos of campaign ads or the public communication, either internet or television. FPPC Enforcement Division is then able to quickly view the ads to determine if they contain proper disclosure and take appropriate action if they don't. The portal allows the public the option to provide their name or remain anonymous and report the ad without filing a complaint with the FPPC.



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“If it’s political advertising, it has to have proper disclosure on it, no matter the source.” said FPPC Enforcement Chief Galena West. “We rely on the public to help us make sure the correct information is out there and that campaigns and the various public entities follow the law.”

Since FPPC AdWATCH resumed earlier this year, the public has submitted 93 ads, with 17 resulting in open investigations. During its initial run in 2018, the public uploaded more than 150 ads to FPPC AdWATCH. In addition, FPPC Enforcement Division proactively reviewed 600 more ads in 2018 and found more than 120 advertisements that were potentially non-compliant.

When the FPPC Enforcement Division determines who is responsible for the ad, they are then contacted for correction or removal of the non-compliant advertisement, if feasible. The same basic process will be used to determine if government entities that communicate about election-related items such as ballot measures are in compliance with the law and bring them into compliance with the Political Reform Act.

This system is active. Just go to the FPPC website (<http://www.fppc.ca.gov>) and you’ll find FPPC AdWATCH both on the home page and on the Enforcement tab (<http://www.fppc.ca.gov/enforcement/adwatch.html>). Click there and you will be ready to put in your information.

The Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) is California’s governmental ethics and campaign disclosure agency.

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