



10/22/2025

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission
City of Seattle
P.O. Box 94729
Seattle, WA 98124

RE: Appeal of Determination on Staff Bonuses and Voucher Gathering Payout

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to formally appeal the determinations outlined in the October 6, 2025 letter regarding staff bonuses and the \$30,000 voucher gathering payment associated with the Armstrong for All mayoral campaign.

First, I ask the Commission to reconsider a reasonable staff bonus payment for each member of the team. When calculating the bonuses, I was told by SEEC staff to just put something forward, so I thought \$4,000 would be equal to one month's pay in a full-time job and to offer the team one month's pay as gratitude for their work considering we raised significantly more in vouchers than is being dispersed to the campaign. Specifically, I request at least \$2,000 for Jeanne Legault, in recognition of the extensive accounting and compliance work she has provided following the Primary Election. Her continued service has been critical in closing out financial records and ensuring post-election reporting accuracy. Whatever amounts are deemed reasonable by the committee are acceptable on my end as a simple thank you for the team.

Second, I request an appeal of the denial of the \$30,000 payment due under our contract with Break Blue Strategies (BBS) for voucher gathering. While the total payment was structured to be disbursed upon completion of the project, the overall labor and outreach costs are consistent with the monthly expenses incurred by comparable mayoral campaigns during the same election cycle. The timing of the payment was contractually determined, and I would like to be an individual who follows through a contract. I have attached a letter from the BBS team as well.

I respectfully ask the Commission to review these determinations and approve these expenditures as reasonable, documented campaign costs in alignment with both the spirit and intent of the Democracy Voucher Program. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Ry Armstrong

Break Blue Strategies is writing to appeal to the full Ethics and Elections Commission. First, the bonuses that Ry wants to deliver to the team are compensation for hardships they had to endure, from pay that sometimes came weeks and months later than payment due dates because of the campaign's at-times tenuous financial position to hours worked long into the night. Some invoices are still unpaid as of 10/7/2025, despite the campaign having more than enough in approved voucher funds. Secondly, denying payment for the \$30,000 invoice, covering legitimate, completed work in support of Ry's campaign for Seattle Mayor, would cause severe and unjust harm to a small LGBTQ+ owned firm. The team at Break Blue Strategies acted in full compliance with all applicable rules regarding voucher gathering, verification, and management.

More broadly, the intent of the Democracy Voucher program is to make it possible for candidates who might otherwise be unable to run for office to do so, and to have a fair opportunity to earn the support of Seattle residents. A campaign's vote total should not be used as a measure of whether it deserves payment for the vouchers it rightfully collected, nor as a proxy for how hard its team worked.

Thousands of hours went into this campaign, from dozens of volunteers, from our team at Break Blue Strategies, and from Ry's own direct engagement with voters across the city, whether on the phone, in neighborhoods, or at community forums and events. The work was real, substantial, and fully aligned with both the letter and spirit of the voucher program.

“Voucher Gathering Fee”

The “Voucher Gathering” amount does not represent profit but agreed-upon compensation for expenses already incurred, primarily payroll and operational costs, directly benefiting Ry's campaign. Break Blue Strategies spent collectively over 40 hours a week working on Ry's campaign, with multiple staff members interacting with the campaign daily, including night and weekend work from January of 2025 until well into September 2025.

We at Break Blue included this term in their contract at the outset of Ry's campaign as a way for the campaign to pay less upfront and more as debt that would be paid once the campaign had gained momentum. We provided far more than just fundraising support, serving as strategic, communications, and field consultants. When translated into a monthly rate, the \$30,000 total, combined with a reduced \$5,000 monthly fee, amounted to an average of \$8,750 per month, fairly reflecting the level of experience and scope of work we brought to the campaign. We bill similar-scope campaigns a rate that is higher than that for full-service work that involves the entire firm.

We made repeated efforts to ensure that all their invoices were properly reported as debt by the campaign's treasurer. We have attached email correspondence that documents some of the challenges encountered in getting this debt accurately reported.

We also incurred tens of thousands of dollars of sub-vendor debt (see C4 filings for July and August; DSPolitical CTV ads) with the understanding Armstrong for All would raise enough in vouchers to pay us back.

Importantly, our role in fundraising and voucher operations extended far beyond simple "voucher gathering" and followed program rules. Our work included:

- Developing standard operating procedures for the campaign's voucher process.
- Training the Campaign Manager and assistant on proper gathering and verification practices.
- Spending hundreds of hours scanning and editing spreadsheets, verifying each name individually against the City's voter file.
- Writing a custom verification program and managing timely submission of all materials to the City.
- Staffing Ry at events.

This was not just oversight work but hands-on execution. It was meticulous, labor-intensive, and carried out by experienced professionals who have supported nearly half a dozen voucher campaigns, including a current incumbent City Councilmember, and candidates for City Attorney, Council, and Mayor over the past 4 years.

We are confident campaign followed both the letter and the spirit of the law in limiting "paid voucher gathering." From the campaign's first field hires to our last, the field organizers did far more than simply gather vouchers. They identified supporters and joined Ry at events and in voter contact.

By late June, the campaign was in a stronger financial position and able to hire more experienced and qualified field organizers than at the outset. This improvement is reflected in both their compensation and the turnover among those registered with the City as campaign representatives. As a result, the campaign was able to significantly increase voucher collection through August 15, when we ended gathering operations.

The total amount raised was sufficient to pay off existing debt with a comfortable surplus. The team at Break Blue Strategies processed these forms through September 2, with many submissions arriving at the last possible moment and taking a week or longer to process.

There was no foul play or violations of the spirit of the law, just the opportunity for a late breakthrough.

For these reasons we respectfully request reconsideration and approval of the campaign invoice of \$30,000, as well as bonus payments.

Campaign	Fundraising Services	GC Services	Communications	Total	Note
Harrell 2021	\$5,500.00	\$3,000.00		\$8,500.00	
Lorena Gonzalez 2021	\$6,000.00		\$3,500.00	\$9,500.00	High staff cost
Colleen Echohawk 2021	5000		2500	\$7,500.00	
Harrell 2025	5500	5000		\$10,500.00	
Wilson 2025	3500	1000		\$4,500.00	High staff cost
Armstrong 2025	5000	3750		\$8,750.00	