

PTA and the Principal

Communicating together: Legal landmines—watch your step!

Here are some common flags that indicate a legal landmine is nearby. Seek a guide to navigate safely.

Flag	Landmine	What to do	What is OK
<p><i>Political messages:</i> Any message that’s political in nature, whether it’s supporting a candidate or ballot measure or issuing a “call to action”—encouraging people to take a stand on a legislative issue. Examples: Vote yes on Simple Majority! Call your legislator and tell him to increase the levy lid! Contribute to Senator Smith’s campaign!</p>	<p><i>Public Disclosure Commission—state law:</i> Public schools cannot use ANY resources to promote or disparage political candidates, legislative bills, or ballot measures. Offenders can be personally fined. This means a school cannot use its newsletter, webpage, table-space at an event, kid-mail, or any other resource for such political messages.</p>	<p>Before trying to jointly publish any political information with a school or hand out political information at a school event, make sure the message has been cleared by the District’s director of communications, 425-837-7004. Often the PTSA Council’s Legislative Chair will clear a message and send it to all PTSA local unit presidents.</p> <p>When in doubt, call for clarification!</p>	<p>Info that’s factual and objective about ballot measures is OK—but this is a fine line even experts often cannot pin down. For instance, schools can issue a reminder about a primary date or a message asking people to register to vote. PTSAs can also rent facility space at schools to plan campaigns. PTSAs can mail or email their membership on an issue that local PTSA unit General Membership has endorsed.</p> <p>Questions? Call!</p>
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<p><i>Student’s personal information:</i> First and last names, pictures, quotes, and/or class work in any school/District publication such as a newsletter, website, brochure, class lists, yearbook, or promotional flier. Or any time such student information is included in a PTSA-only publication or website if the school/District allowed the PTSA to have access to that student information during the school day or a sanctioned event.</p>	<p><i>Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—federal law:</i> This allows families to opt out of having any personal information released by the District.</p> <p><i>Family Privacy Options—District form:</i> Families use this form to opt out of releasing directory information to the PTSA and having their students’ name, work, or picture on websites.</p>	<p>Any time the school/District allows the PTSA access to student information or uses student information in a school/District publication, every child needs to be cleared through FERPA and the Family Privacy Options database. Your school secretary or registrar has that information and, generally, is very good about proactively clearing any student information for publication.</p> <p>Ask your school’s secretary or registrar to make sure your student info has been cleared.</p>	<p>Expect that any mailing lists or directory information you receive from the school or District will not contain information of FERPA students or families who checked the appropriate Family Privacy box.</p>
Flag	Landmine	What to do	What is OK
<p><i>Using the District’s bulk mailing permit instead of the PTSA Council’s bulk mailing permit to mail home information about the PTSA and its events and programs.</i></p>	<p><i>United States Post Office rates—federal law:</i> Because both schools and the PTSA hold a non-profit bulk mail permit, they can send joint mailings under either one’s permit. Any mailing sent under the District’s permit must “belong” to or be under the direct guidance of the school or District. No commercial fliers can be included as part of a mailing under this bulk mailing permit.</p>	<p>Every time you use the District’s bulk mailing permit, the mailing must “belong” to the District and contain no commercial fliers. Any publication created by and belonging to the PTSA must be mailed using the PTSA Council permit.</p> <p>For clarification, consult the PTSA Council, the “Basic Guidelines to PTA Non-Profit Bulk Mailings” sheet, or the Council website www.issaquahptsa.org or call Director of Accounting Martin Turney at 425-837-7023.</p>	<p>School newsletters or publications can contain PTSA information, including membership forms, although the school must be the official owner of the publication to use its bulk mail permit. The school, therefore, has final authority over any PTSA info in the publication.</p> <p>The PTSA local unit cannot use the PTSA Council bulk mail permit to mail home commercial fliers.</p> <p>Follow “Basis Guidelines to PTA Non-Profit Bulk Mailings.”</p>