

Memo to WSFB PAC,

The Yakima/Klickitat County Farm Bureau (Y/KCFB) has recommended Sheriff Songer twice during the 2022 Primary season to the WSFB PAC, each time the PAC has failed to endorse our favored sheriff for Klickitat County.

The Y/KCFB believes these rejections by the WSFB PAC amount to a significant violation of its By-Laws.

Article 9.1 states:

Acceptance of County Farm Bureau Recommendations. The Board of Trustees shall accept County Farm Bureau candidate endorsement recommendations for local offices, the Washington State Senate, the Washington State House, and the United States House, provided that at least two thirds of the affected County Farm Bureaus agree on the candidate recommendations in congressional districts that include more than one County Farm Bureau and that all of the affected County Farm Bureaus agree on the candidate recommendations in legislative districts that include more than one County Farm Bureau. The Board of Trustees should reject endorsement recommendations only upon a showing of exceptional and compelling circumstances and only after consultation with the affected County Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Rejection should not be exercised to allow the Board of Trustees to substitute its own judgment for the County Farm Bureau's judgment without justification. Rejection shall result in the PAC declining to endorse any candidate and signifying on all publications of PAC endorsements that the PAC is remaining neutral in those affected elections.

Specifically:

"..... The Board of Trustees should reject endorsement recommendations only upon a showing of exceptional and compelling circumstances and only after consultation with the affected County Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Rejection should not be exercised to allow the Board of Trustees to substitute its own judgment for the County Farm Bureau's judgment without justification....."

Our Farm Bureau has been informed that the core reason for rejecting our recommendation of Sheriff Songer for endorsement is his safety program concerning Cougars. This program has been challenged in Court by the Mountain Lion Foundation and failed. A bill was then introduced into State Legislature to repeal the provisions within the law which empowers Counties to protect their citizens. This bill failed to be voted out of committee. Our Farm Bureau believes rejecting endorsement of Sheriff Songer for this reason is not in compliance with the PAC By-Laws which state: "..... Trustees should reject endorsement recommendations only upon showing of exceptional and compelling circumstances and only after consultation with the affected County Farm Bureau of Directors. Rejection should not be exercised to allow the Board of Trustees to substitute its own judgment for the County Farm Bureau's judgment without justification."

The threshold of “**exceptional or compelling**” supporting rejection simply does not apply in this case. The word “exceptional” carries the meaning “rare or aberrant”. The word “compelling” carries the meaning of “force”. Simply, PAC by-law language here applies to instances of criminal or other heinous activity on the part of the candidate, not the matter of a Sheriff protecting his citizens with legal standing per Court and Legislative procedure.

Our Farm Bureau firmly believes that the PAC is substituting its judgment for ours which is a violation of its by-laws.

As the By-laws are written, the PAC is also required to consult with the County Farm Bureau prior to a recommendation being rejected. In this instance, we received notification after the fact without prior consultation in both instances. We believe this is reflective of the disposition of PAC members in general than the Chair’s actions, nevertheless, it is another violation of the PACs rules.

IF the WSFB PAC continues to ignore its by-laws and reject our recommendation a third time, the Y/KCFB is prepared to endorse Sheriff Songer on its own. While its been customary for the Counties to recommend and the PAC to endorse, it is not the only legal path. Our Farm Bureau is a 501c (5) and that allows us to endorse political candidates. The endorsement in question affects only one County Farm Bureau – ours with a County we represent.

Additionally, if the PAC fails to follow its by-laws again, the Y/KCFB requests all the minutes and emails from the Committee that pertain to all three rejections so that a more detailed analysis of this matter can be accomplished.

Finally, the Y/KCFB believes that the PAC By-Laws require amending to add language that specifies actions that must be undertaken when the by-laws are not properly followed. We believe that penalty need to be present when there are repeated violation of significance.

The WSFB PAC has violated its By-Laws in a significant manner and this is unacceptable to the Y/KCFB. We trust the PAC will correct this situation but barring that we are prepared to endorse Sheriff Songer and seek other actions as well.

Sincerely,

Mark Herke
President, Y/KCFB