

## Chapter 3.14 - OAKLAND FALSE ENDORSEMENT IN CAMPAIGN LITERATURE

**Sections:**

## Article I. - In General

## 3.14.010 - Findings and Purpose.

The Oakland City Council finds and declares:

- (A) Campaign literature that falsely represented the position of persons was distributed in a recent municipal election.
- (B) Such false representations confuse voters and do not materially advance the public's interest in an uninhibited, robust and wide-open debate on public issues or election of candidates for public office.
- (C) False representations made and distributed during a period near the election unduly burden persons whose positions are misrepresented by precluding them from effectively addressing the falsehood through the production of more speech in order to bring forth a more truthful campaign.
- (D) Prohibiting falsehoods that are knowingly or recklessly made in campaign literature during the period set forth in this chapter will serve the city of Oakland's compelling interest in ensuring the integrity of the electoral process.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)

## 3.14.020 - Citation.

This chapter may be cited as the Oakland False Endorsement In Campaign Literature.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)

## Article II. - Definitions

## 3.14.030 - Definitions.

For the purposes of this chapter, the following definitions shall be applicable:

- A. "Campaign literature" includes but is not limited to any advertisements on radio or television or in a newspaper or periodical, sample ballots, press releases, flyers, door hangers, pamphlets, brochures, cards, or billboards distributed with the intent of influencing the outcome of an election.
- B. "Candidate" means any individual who seeks election to any city elective office.
- C. "False endorsement" means the use of any statement, signature, name, photograph or image which represents as a fact that a person supports or opposes a candidate or measure when the person

does not.

- D. "Measure" means any city referendum, recall, initiative or ballot proposition, which is submitted or intended to be submitted to the voters of the city of Oakland.
- E. "Person" means any individual, proprietorship, firm, partnership, joint venture, syndicate, business trust, company, corporation, limited liability company, association, committee, and any other organization or group of persons acting in concert.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)

#### Article III. - Prohibition on False Endorsements

##### 3.14.040 - False Endorsement in Campaign Literature Prohibited.

No person, within forty-five (45) days before any primary or general election held in the city of Oakland, shall knowingly pay for, direct, supervise or authorize the distribution of any campaign literature that contains a false endorsement if such person acts either with knowledge of the falsity of the endorsement or with reckless disregard for the truth or falsity of the endorsement.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)

##### 3.14.050 - Exemptions.

- A. This chapter shall not apply to any person whose only action in connection with the false endorsement is to make a lawful contribution to any candidate or committee.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)

#### Article IV. - Enforcement

##### 3.14.060 - Enforcement and Penalties.

- A. Criminal Violation. Any person who violates the provisions of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor.
- B. Complaints Filed With The Public Ethics Commission. The Oakland Public Ethics Commission, pursuant to its General Complaint Procedures, may receive complaints alleging a violation of this chapter for the purpose of determining whether to request the District Attorney to prosecute an alleged misdemeanor violation. No complaint alleging a violation of this Act may be filed with the Public Ethics Commission until after the election in which the alleged false endorsement was distributed. Nothing in this section is intended to create a mandatory duty for the Public Ethics Commission to request prosecution of an alleged misdemeanor violation.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)

#### Article V. - Miscellaneous

## 3.14.070 - Statute of Limitations.

No criminal action alleging a violation of this chapter shall be filed more than four years after the date the violation occurred.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)

## 3.14.080 - Severability.

The provisions of this chapter are declared to be separate and severable. The invalidity of any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or portion of this chapter, or the invalidity of the application thereof to any person or circumstances, shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this chapter, or the validity of its application to other persons or circumstances.

(Ord. 12536 § 1, 2003)