

Alaska State Legislature

Select Committee on Legislative Ethics

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SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE Complaint S 24-01: Senator Scott Kawasaki

DETERMINATION OF PROBABLE CAUSE

The Senate Subcommittee of the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics (Committee) received a complaint on December 17, 2024, against Senator Scott Kawasaki. The complaint was designated S 24-01. The committee met on January 31, May 30, and September 23, 2025 for a Preliminary Examination, Scope of Investigation and to reach a determination regarding the complaint.

ALLEGED VIOLATIONS

1. On **July 23, 2024**, Senator Kawasaki's office distributed an official e-newsletter to constituents. This action occurred **28 days before the August 20th primary election...** Senator Kawasaki's office sent another official e-newsletter on **August 9, 2024**, just **11 days before the election...**
2. On **August 1, 2024, 19 days before the 2024 primary election**, a member of Senator Kawasaki's official staff was observed during state-paid business hours canvassing Fairbanks neighborhoods... The state staffer on paid state time distributed literature promoting the opening of Senator Kawasaki's interim office... The timing and messaging of these materials strongly suggest campaign intent.

*"My Fairbanks office is now open for interim! Do you have any questions or want updates about the legislative sessions. Want to voice your concerns about issues important to you and Alaska? You can reach me any time using the contact information on the back, or stop by my office and someone can assist you.
Working Hard for Fairbanks Families, Senator Scott Kawasaki. "*

3. On **August 5, 2024**, the same staff member was observed canvassing door-to-door distributing invitations to Senator Kawasaki's "Picnic in the Park" event. This event featured Senator Kawasaki's official title and was described as an official office event.
4. The "Picnic in the Park" event, held within 30 days of the primary, prominently featured Senator Kawasaki's official title and was promoted as an office event. However, its promotion on

Kawasaki's campaign Facebook page, managed by "Friends of Scott Kawasaki," effectively turned the event into a campaign gathering funded with state resources.

PARTS OF THE ETHICS ACT THAT WERE ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED

The complainant did not specify sections of the Legislative Ethics Act, AS 24.60, believed to have been violated. Therefore, the committee evaluated the allegations and identified sections of the act that may have been violated if the allegations are substantiated to include:

Sec. 24.60.030. Prohibited conduct and conflicts of interest.

- (a) A legislator or legislative employee may not
 - (5) use or authorize the use of state funds, facilities, equipment, services, or another government asset or resource for the purpose of political fund raising or campaigning;
- (c) Unless approved by the committee, during a campaign period for an election in which the legislator or legislative employee is a candidate, a legislator or legislative employee may not use or permit another to use state funds, other than funds to which the legislator is entitled under AS 24.10.110, to print or distribute a political mass mailing to individuals eligible to vote for the candidate.
 - (1) a "campaign period" is the period that
 - (A) begins 60 days before the date of an election to the board of an electric or telephone cooperative organized under AS 10.25, a municipal election, or a primary election, or that begins on the date of the governor's proclamation calling a special election; and
 - (B) ends the day after the cooperative election, municipal election, or general or special election;
 - (2) a mass mailing is considered to be political if it is from or about a legislator, legislative employee, or another person who is a candidate for election or reelection to the legislature or another federal, state, or municipal office or to the board of an electric or telephone cooperative

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION ANALYSIS

The Ethics Administrator completed a preliminary examination under the provisions of AS 24.60.170 Proceedings before the committee; limitations, and Committee Rules of Procedure, Section 14(d), Complaints, Preliminary Examination of Complaint.

Jurisdiction and Time Limitation

The committee has jurisdiction over the subject of the complaint, Senator Scott Kawasaki, pursuant to AS 24.60.020(a). The acts alleged in the complaint occurred within five years before the date the complaint was filed with the committee. AS 24.60.170(a). The alleged violations occurred during the period of July 23 through August 5, 2024. The campaign period for 2024 began June 21, 2024, and ended November 5, 2024.

EXAMINATION ANALYSIS

Senator Kawasaki stated in his August 16th written responses/documentation and during the August 20th interview that state funds were used to print and distribute his Fairbanks office opening flier and “Picnic in the Park” fliers, as well as the July 23, 2024 and August 9, 2024 legislative newsletters. Senator Kawasaki stated that he was running unopposed in the primary and did not believe the campaign period limitations would apply. However, the restrictions stipulated in AS 24.60.030(a)(5) and 24.60.030(c) apply to legislators running for a legislative seat whether running unopposed or opposed.

DETERMINATION OF PROBABLE CAUSE ORDER AND DECISION

The committee determined that Senator Kawasaki, whether intentionally or not, violated the provisions of AS 24.60.030(a)(5) of the Ethics Act by using state funds for political fund raising or campaigning. Senator Kawasaki violated AS 24.60.030(c) by printing and distributing mass mailings, as noted above, during a campaign period. A mass mailing is considered to be political if it is from or about a legislator, who is a candidate for election or reelection to the legislature. A campaign period begins 60 days before a primary election and ends the day after a general election.

RECOMMENDATION

The committee determined corrective action is not warranted in this matter. The committee reminds Senator Kawasaki the Ethics Committee and staff are available to provide clarification, informal advice, or Advisory Opinions to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

Adopted September 23, 2025, by a majority
of the Senate Subcommittee

_____/s/_____
Joyce M. Anderson

Members Participating

Joyce Anderson, Chair
Deb Fancher
H. Conner Thomas
Dennis “Skip” Cook
Carl White
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Robert Yundt