

Statement Concerning the Denouncement of AS Elections Presidential Candidate Abdul-Malik Ford by Dayjha McMillan, Senator from the Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies

Written by AS Election Board Chair, Bennett Massey-Helber and Edited by the 2019 AS Election Board

This document represents the consolidated opinion of the 2019 AS Election Board and, due to the limited jurisdiction of the AS Election Board, it is to be the official opinion on the actions and implications of the denouncement made by sitting AS Senator Dayjha McMillan on April 29th, 2019. Section 3.IV.c of the AS Election Code states “current AS employees, may not, as employees or individuals, endorse candidates.” As Senator McMillan released a statement that reads “I do not believe [Abdul-Malik Ford] is equipped nor qualified to be AS president,” the AS Election Board believes that it is necessary to discuss if Senator McMillan has violated Section 3.IV.c of the AS Election Code.

This Election Board also suggests that Senator Dayjha McMillan could be found to be in violation Section 3.II.a of the Election Code which states that “candidates, measure sponsors, official opposition campaigns, or any person otherwise involved in a campaign will adhere to the Candidate Conduct Agreement provided in the candidate filing packet.” By denouncing a candidate, Senator McMillan could be considered to be a “person otherwise involved in a campaign” and therefore may be responsible for adhering to the Candidate Conduct Agreement. Therefore, the Election Board would assert that the creation of a public statement denouncing a candidate violates the Candidate Conduct Agreement which states that candidates and anyone involved in a campaign “will conduct [themselves] in a positive, honorable manner throughout the election [and] will refrain from any malicious or unprofessional behavior towards any of the other candidates, the Elections Coordinator, the Election Board, WWU staff, or any other campaign participants or students.”

Furthermore, this board would like to make known that the creation of public endorsements by elected officeholders within the AS is not new and is a part of a pattern that has seen AS officeholders knowingly violate AS policy with endorsements in contested races. In the 2018 elections, former VP for Diversity Erick Yanzon made similar public endorsements of candidates. This was found by the 2018 AS Board to be in violation of the Election Code. Yanzon’s endorsements likely had little effect on the election, as many of the candidates they endorsed lost their respective races. In the case of the 2019 elections, however, the candidate disendorsed by Senator McMillan, Abdul-Malik Ford, lost the race for AS President. While there is no way to know exactly how many votes this denouncement accounted for or how much it factored into Ford’s losing of the presidential election, the Election Board has concluded that this behavior of sitting AS public officials knowingly and openly breaking AS rules and codes is a concerning development, and it is the belief of this board that it must be addressed so that faith in the AS as a fair and neutral arbiter of student voices can be restored.

Since the Election Board does not have jurisdiction over the AS Student Senate, we submit this statement to make known the problem of AS employees unfairly endorsing or denouncing candidates and hope that the AS Student Senate will take action to correct this problem so that all may fairly participate in the



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electoral process within the Associated Students. Therefore, we ask the AS Student Senate to consider this document, the Elections Code, and the grievances against Senator McMillan to determine the best course of action in response to Senator McMillan's alleged breach of the AS Election Code. The Election Board wants to make clear that we have not had any official discussion or ruling on Senator McMillan's actions and wish to wholly place the onus on the AS Student Senate to resolve the issue.

Finally, this is a public document based on information from a public hearing that determined a breach of public trust.

Sincerely,

Bennett Massey-Helber, Election Board Chair

CC Eric Alexander, Assoc. Dean for Student Engagement & Viking Union Director and Advisor to the Election Board

Leti Romo, Assistant Director for Student Representation & Governance

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