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5 **IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE**
6 **OF WASHINGTON FOR THURSTON COUNTY**

7 ARTHUR WEST,

8 Plaintiff,

9
10 Vs.

11 JAMES WALSH, individually, and in
12 his official capacity as a Member of
13 the Washington State House of
14 Representatives for the 19th
15 Legislative District, and in his semi-
16 official capacity as Chair of the
17 Washington State Republican Party;
WASHINGTON STATE
18 REPUBLICAN PARTY; and STATE
19 OF WASHINGTON,

20 Defendants.

No.

**PLAINTIFF WEST'S FIRST
AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR
DEFAMATION, DEFAMATION
PER SE, AND FALSE LIGHT
INVASION OF PRIVACY**

21 **I. INTRODUCTION**

22 1.1 This is an action for defamation, defamation per se, and false light invasion
23 of privacy arising from a series of false and defamatory statements of fact
24 published by Defendant James Walsh (“Walsh”), individually and in his
25 official and semi-official capacities, and by Defendant Washington State
26 Republican Party (“WSRP”), concerning Plaintiff Arthur West (“West”) and

his conduct as a litigant before the Honorable Superior Court Judge Lanese in a case involving Washington election-law litigation.

1.2 Walsh is a sitting Member of the Washington State House of Representatives for the 19th Legislative District and the Chair of the WSRP.

1.3 On or about August 2026, Walsh published a post on his personal, public Facebook page (the “First Post”) falsely stating that West was “tricked” as a non-lawyer into making “procedural errors” that “killed the substantive challenges” to the Public Investment Impact Disclosure (“PIID”) for Initiative 26-645, and further falsely asserted that this was the product of “trickery and exploitation of vulnerable people,” characterizing the ruling of the Honorable Judge Lanese as typical of judges who are **“rubber stamps for whatever left-wing politicians send them.”** (Emphasis added)

1.4 In addition, Defendant WSRP published a second statement on its own official Facebook page in a post titled “Call to Action” (the “Second Post”), which repeated and amplified the false claim that West was “tricked,” and added a new, specific, false factual assertion – that Judge Lanese “set a trap” for West that *“tricked West into stating he was also representing Let’s Go Washington’s case — which he was not.”* The Second Post quotes Walsh, identified therein as WSRP Chairman, making this and other statements concerning West.

1.5 These statements are false statements of fact, not opinion or rhetorical hyperbole. West did not in any way state, represent, or imply to the court that he represented Let's Go Washington's case, and was not “tricked” into doing so.

1.6 The Second Post republishes and repeats the underlying false and defamatory implication of the First Post to a new and additional audience, doubling the reach of the original defamatory content and demonstrating a continuing and escalating course of defamatory conduct directed at West.

1.7 The Second Post was published on the official WSRP Facebook page under the imprimatur of a major statewide political party and its Chairman, a sitting elected state official. Publication by an organization and official of this stature and reach carries substantially greater apparent authority, credibility, and audience than an ordinary private communication, and correspondingly greater potential to injure West's reputation, standing in the community, and professional standing.

1.8 The Second Post also contains statements characterizing Thurston County Superior Court Judge Chris Lanese's conduct as **“highly unusual,” “even hysterical,”** more befitting **“a radical activist than an impartial jurist,”** and **“unethical and unprofessional,”** and calls on the public to file complaints against the Honorable Judge Lanese with the Commission on Judicial Conduct. West does not assert, and this Complaint does not allege, any claim regarding those statements; West retains the highest respect for the Honorable Judge Lanese despite his numerous adverse rulings, and expresses no view on the propriety of any such complaint. These inflammatory statements are noted solely to place the statements concerning West in their full context, including the aggressive and personally targeted tenor of the surrounding publications concerning the same judicial proceeding and venerated Judicial Officer.

1.9 The statements concerning West falsely accuse him of professional and ethical misconduct in the practice of law-related advocacy and litigation,

1 constitute defamation per se, and have caused and continue to cause damage
2 to West's professional reputation and standing in the community, built over
3 approximately 30 years.

4 1.10 On or about August 21, 2026, West sent Walsh a timely and adequate
5 written request for correction or clarification pursuant to RCW 7.96.040
6 concerning the First Post, identifying the defamatory statements with
7 particularity and demanding a retraction and apology.

8 1.11 Walsh did not issue a correction, clarification, or retraction of the First Post.
9 Instead, Walsh responded with a snide written communication that neither
10 corrected nor withdrew the defamatory statements.

11 1.12 West has separately prior to filing this suit, sent Walsh and the WSRP via
12 Walsh, a timely and adequate written request for correction or clarification
13 pursuant to RCW 7.96.040 concerning the statements in the Second Post,
14 identifying those statements with particularity and demanding a retraction
15 and apology.

16 1.13 West has satisfied the statutory prerequisites to suit under RCW 7.96.040 as
17 to all Defendants and all statements alleged herein, and is entitled to the
18 relief requested below.
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22 **II. PARTIES AND JURISDICTION**

23 2.1 Plaintiff Arthur West is a resident of Thurston County, Washington, and has
24 been an active participant in Washington public-records and election-law
25 litigation for approximately 30 years. He has standing to maintain this
26 action.

1 2.2 Defendant James Walsh is, upon information and belief, a resident of Grays
2 Harbor County, Washington. Walsh is sued individually; in his official
3 capacity as a Member of the Washington State House of Representatives for
4 the 19th Legislative District; and in his semi-official capacity as Chair of the
5 WSRP. Each capacity is pleaded in the alternative and is not intended to
6 concede that any statement was made within the scope of any office.

7 2.3 Defendant Washington State Republican Party is a Washington political
8 party organization, headquartered in Bellevue, Washington, that owns,
9 controls, and publishes content on the official WSRP Facebook page,
10 including the Second Post described herein. WSRP is sued directly for its
11 own publication of defamatory statements and, in the alternative, on grounds
12 of ratification and adoption of Walsh's statements by publishing and
13 republishing them under its own institutional name and authority.

14 2.4 Defendant State of Washington is joined as a necessary party under the
15 doctrine of respondeat superior to the extent it is established that Walsh's
16 statements were made in the course and scope of, or under color of, his
17 duties or authority as a state legislator or state office-holder.

18 2.5 This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action, which seeks
19 damages in excess of the jurisdictional minimum of this Court.

20 2.6 Venue is proper in this Court under RCW 4.12.020 and RCW 4.92.010
21 because Plaintiff resides in Thurston County, the State of Washington is a
22 defendant, and a substantial part of the events giving rise to this action,
23 including receipt and effect of the defamatory publications and the
24 underlying judicial proceeding they describe, occurred in Thurston County.
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III. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

A. The First Post

3.1 West has litigated numerous public-records and election-related matters in Washington courts, including a challenge to the PIID for Initiative 26-645, referred to by Walsh as the “PIID.”

3.2 On his personal public Facebook page, at the URL <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1H3gz8BjvA/>, Walsh published the following statements, among others:

“Lanese tricked a non-lawyer into making procedural errors that killed the substantive challenges to the PIID made by several organizations, including the WAGOP. (See the footnote on page 3 of the denial for details.) Those substantive challenges were NEVER HEARD. This bad but predictable denial of substantive arguments through trickery and exploitation of vulnerable people is typical of judges who are rubber stamps for whatever left-wing politicians send them.”

3.3 The First Post identifies West, by context and by the referenced court footnote, as the “non-lawyer” who was purportedly “tricked” into “procedural errors” that *“killed the substantive challenges to the PIID made by several organizations, including the WAGOP”* and as the “vulnerable” person who was “exploited” by a judge who allegedly acted as a ***“rubber stamp(s) for whatever left-wing politicians send them”*** (Emphasis added)

1 3.4 In fact, West has the highest respect for all of the Honorable Judges he
2 appears before, especially the Honorable Judge Lanese, and was fully aware
3 of, and in control of, his own litigation decisions. West did not waive any
4 cause of action, did not misrepresent his status, did not commit any
5 procedural error, and expressly requested that the Honorable Judge Lanese
6 delay ruling until later the same day so the other litigants could be heard.

7 3.5 Ironically, the other litigants referenced in the First Post, including the
8 WSRP, had the opportunity to appear or to consolidate their challenges and
9 did not do so; thus, any procedural shortcoming was theirs, not West's.

10 3.6 West is not, and has never been, a “vulnerable person” within the meaning
11 implied by the First Post, and is not a simpleton capable of being “Tricked”
12 or “exploited” by anyone, including the Honorable Judge Lanese, in
13 connection with legal proceedings.
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15 3.7 The statements that West was “tricked,” made “procedural errors,” and was
16 the exploited in the “exploitation of vulnerable people” and “*killed the*
17 *substantive challenges to the PIID made by several organizations, including*
18 *the WAGOP*” are false statements of fact capable of being proven false, and
19 are not statements of pure opinion.

20 3.8 The statement that West's conduct “*killed the substantive challenges to the*
21 *PIID made by several organizations, including the WAGOP*” is a separate
22 and independently defamatory statement of fact, communicated to and
23 concerning a specifically identified third-party organization, the WSRP. This
24 statement falsely represents to the WSRP, its officers, and its members that
25 West's conduct destroyed the WSRP's own substantive legal challenge, and
26 falsely implies that West bore responsibility toward the WSRP for the loss

1 of that challenge, when in fact the WSRP's own litigation decisions,
2 including its failure to appear or consolidate, were the true cause of any
3 procedural result affecting its claims.

4 3.9 The statements in the First Post falsely impute to West a lack of competence,
5 honesty, and professional integrity in litigation-related conduct, and falsely
6 suggest that West engaged in wrongful conduct in the course of legal
7 proceedings.

8 3.10 The First Post was published to the public on Facebook and was accessible
9 to, and read by, third parties, including members of the public, members of
10 the legal and political community, and West's professional and community
11 contacts. Shortly thereafter, West received hate mail.
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13 3.11 On or about August 21, 2026, West sent Walsh a written request for
14 correction or clarification pursuant to RCW 7.96.040, identifying the
15 defamatory statements in the First Post with particularity, explaining their
16 falsity, and demanding a clear and unambiguous retraction and apology.

17 3.12 Walsh received the request and, rather than correcting, clarifying, or
18 retracting the statements, responded in writing with a further communication
19 that did not withdraw or correct any of the statements identified in West's
20 request.
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22 3.13 Walsh and the WSRP, which he chairs, have, to date, failed and refused to
23 correct, clarify, or retract the defamatory statements in the First Post.
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B. The Second Post

3.14 On or about August 2026, Defendant WSRP published, on its official Facebook page, a post titled “Call to Action: Washington State Republican Party is urging concerned voters to file a complaint with the Commission on Judicial Conduct...” (the “Second Post”), at the WSRP's official Facebook page.

3.15 The Second Post quotes Defendant Walsh, identified therein as “@WAGOP Chairman Rep. Jim Walsh,” stating: “*Lanese dismissed Let's Go Washington's legal challenge WITHOUT A HEARING after hearing a separate challenge to I-645's PIID brought by open-government activist Arthur West.*” (emphasis added)

3.16 The Second Post further quotes Walsh stating: “But the most problematic violation of judicial standards that Lanese committed was setting a trap for West (who is not an attorney and was representing himself in his case) that *tricked West into stating he was also representing Let's Go Washington's case—which he was not.* Lanese then pounced on West's error and dismissed BOTH challenges to the misleading PIID.” (emphasis supplied)

3.17 The Second Post also quotes Let's Go Washington founder Brian Heywood stating: “We came prepared to make our case... Instead, *a civilian who does not represent us was invited to argue issues from our challenge*, and then the court shut the door.” (Emphasis supplied)

3.18 The statement that West was “tricked... into stating he was also representing Let's Go Washington's case” is a new, specific, false statement of fact. West did not state, represent, or imply to the Honorable Judge Lanese that he

represented Let's Go Washington, did not argue issues from their challenge, and made no such alleged error.

3.19 Heywood's statement that "a civilian who does not represent us was invited to argue issues from our challenge" is likewise false and implies that West improperly inserted himself into, or purported to represent, Let's Go Washington's separate legal challenge. This is false and defamatory.

3.20 The Second Post repeats and republishes the underlying false claim that West was "tricked," originally made in the First Post, to a new and additional audience via the official WSRP Facebook page, thereby republishing the defamatory matter and giving rise to an independent cause of action, in addition to evidencing a continuing and escalating course of defamatory conduct directed at West.

3.21 The Second Post was published under the name and authority of the WSRP, a major statewide political party, and quotes its Chairman, who is simultaneously a sitting Member of the Washington State House of Representatives. Publication by an organization of this stature and reach, quoting a current elected state official, carries substantially greater apparent credibility and audience reach than an individual's personal social media post, and correspondingly greater potential to injure West's reputation and standing in the community and profession.

3.22 The Second Post also contains statements characterizing the Honorable Judge Lanese's conduct as "**highly unusual,**" "**even hysterical,**" more befitting "**a radical activist than an impartial jurist,**" and "**unethical and unprofessional,**" and calls on the public to file complaints against the Honorable Judge Lanese with the Commission on Judicial Conduct.

As stated above, West asserts no claim regarding these statements about the Honorable Judge Lanese, who he has the deepest and most profound respect for, and references them solely for context and to illustrate the politically charged tenor of the publications concerning the same proceeding.

3.23 Upon information and belief, a private citizen, in a public comment posted beneath the Second Post on WSRP's official Facebook page, wrote: "Sounds like Arthur West was a set up or a plant to make sure the case wasn't heard." Plaintiff does not allege that WSRP authored this comment or that WSRP is directly liable for a third party's comment; rather, this comment is alleged as evidence of the actual effect of the First Post and Second Post on the reading public, in addition to the hate mail West received.

3.24 This reader comment demonstrates that at least one member of the public understood and extended Defendants' statements to mean that West had secretly colluded or conspired with unnamed third parties to deliberately sabotage the WSRP's and Let's Go Washington's legal challenges from within – an accusation of intentional dishonesty and bad-faith betrayal considerably more severe than the literal text of the First Post and Second Post standing alone. This is direct evidence that Defendants' statements were understood by their intended audience in a defamatory sense, that such statements are reasonably capable of producing this reading, and of the real-world reputational harm the statements have caused and continue to cause to West in the community and among the reading public.

3.25 West has satisfied the correction-request prerequisites of RCW 7.96.040 as to all Defendants and all statements alleged herein.

IV. CAUSES OF ACTION

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION – Defamation / Defamation Per Se (Walsh and WSRP)

- 4.1 West realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth above.
- 4.2 Walsh and WSRP each made false statements of fact concerning West, as set forth above, including in the First Post and the Second Post.
- 4.3 Walsh published the First Post. WSRP published the Second Post on its own official Facebook page and, in the alternative, is liable for Walsh's statements in the Second Post because he made them in, and WSRP adopted and published them through, his capacity as WSRP Chairman.
- 4.4 The statements were not privileged.
- 4.5 Walsh and WSRP each acted at least negligently, and, in the alternative and to the extent West is deemed a public figure for purposes of this controversy, with actual malice – that is, with knowledge of falsity or reckless disregard for the truth – in publishing and republishing, and in failing to retract, the statements. Walsh's and the WSRP's continuing publication of the Second Post after receiving West's correction demand concerning the identical false claim in the First Post supports an inference of actual malice as to Walsh and the WSRP.
- 4.6 The statements constitute defamation per se because they falsely impute to West negligent, dishonest, and unethical conduct in the course of his professional litigation activity, and are of a kind that tends to injure West in his profession and business.

1 4.7 The reach and apparent authority of Defendants Walsh and WSRP, as a
2 sitting state legislator and a major statewide political party respectively,
3 substantially magnified the audience, credibility, and resulting harm of the
4 defamatory statements as compared to an ordinary private publication.

5 4.8 As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' statements, West has
6 suffered damage to his professional reputation and standing in the
7 community, and related damages in an amount to be proven at trial, or, in the
8 alternative, is entitled to presumed damages as a matter of law given the per
9 se nature of the statements As evidenced by the public reader comment
10 alleged above accusing West of having been a "set up" or "plant," readers of
11 Defendants' statements have in fact drawn the defamatory meaning that
12 Defendants' statements were reasonably capable of conveying, confirming
13 both the defamatory character of the statements and the reality of resulting
14 reputational harm. West even received Hate Mail as a proximate result of
15 these posts.

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17 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION – False Light Invasion of Privacy (Walsh and**
18 **WSRP)**

19 4.9 West realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth above.

20 4.10 Defendants' publications placed West before the public in a false light by
21 portraying him as a person who was deceptively "tricked" and, as a
22 "vulnerable" individual, was "exploited" and who misrepresented who he
23 was representing to enable the defeat of legitimate legal challenges, and by
24 falsely portraying him as having claimed to represent Let's Go Washington.

25 4.11 The false light in which West was placed would be highly offensive to a
26 reasonable person.

1 4.12 Defendants knew, or acted in reckless disregard of, the falsity of the
2 publicized matter and the false light in which West would be placed.

3 4.13 As a direct and proximate result, West has suffered damages in an amount to
4 be proven at trial.

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6 **THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION – Respondeat Superior / Vicarious Liability**
7 **Against the State of Washington**

8 4.14 West realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth above.

9 4.15 To the extent Walsh's defamatory statements were made within the course
10 and scope of his duties, or under color of his authority, as a state legislator,
11 WSRP Chair, and/or state office-holder, Defendant State of Washington is
12 vicariously liable for the resulting damages under the doctrine of respondeat
13 superior and applicable Washington law governing torts by state officers,
14 including RCW 4.92 et seq.

15 4.16 This cause of action is pleaded in the alternative to, and without waiver of,
16 West's claims against Walsh in his individual and semi-official capacities.

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18 **FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION – Republication (WSRP)**

19 4.17 West realleges and incorporates by reference the allegations set forth above.

20 4.18 The Second Post republished, restated, and amplified the defamatory matter
21 first published in the First Post to a new and broader audience via the official
22 WSRP Facebook page.

23
24 4.19 One who republishes defamatory matter is subject to liability as if that
25 person or entity had originally published it, and republication constitutes a
26 new and separate defamatory publication giving rise to an independent cause
of action and a new limitations period.

1 4.20 WSRP's continuing republication was made with knowledge of West's RCW
2 7.96.040 correction demand concerning many of the same false claims in the
3 First Post.

4 4.21 As a direct and proximate result of WSRP's publication, republication, and
5 failure to retract or correct, West has suffered damages in an amount to be
6 proven at trial.

7 **V. RELIEF REQUESTED**

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9 Wherefore, Plaintiff West respectfully requests the following relief:

10 5.1 A finding and declaration that Defendants' statements were false and
11 defamatory.

12 5.2 An award of general and special damages against Defendants, jointly and
13 severally, in an amount to be proven at trial, including presumed damages
14 for defamation per se.

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16 5.3 An award of punitive or exemplary damages to the extent permitted by law,
17 based on Defendants' knowing or reckless disregard for the truth.

18 5.4 An order requiring Walsh and WSRP to issue a clear and unambiguous
19 retraction and correction of the defamatory statements consistent with RCW
20 7.96.

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22 5.5 An award of costs and reasonable attorneys' fees to the extent permitted by
23 law, including under RCW 7.96.030.

24 5.6 A trial by jury on all issues so triable.

25 5.7 Such other relief as the Court deems just and equitable.
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1 Respectfully submitted this 24th day of August 2026.

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