

Supporting Statement

Disclaimers for Editorials and Commentaries

This topic arose from discussion around the Barco complaint in Dec 2022. The Municipal Code (SJMC) requires a well-defined set of disclosures on any advertising for campaigns, but there are no current specifications for unpaid publications by campaigns. In a traditional newspaper, an unpaid op-ed written by a candidate or other campaign spokesperson would contain an attribution letting the public know the column came from an active campaign. However, similar publications on the Internet do not always follow the same norms and this could produce some potential confusion. In particular, there seems to be a public interest in distinguishing official campaign statements from ones that could be seen as impartial third-party endorsements. Hence, the Board recommends studying the feasibility of an addition to the SJMC that would require disclosure/attribution of publications like op-eds, blogs, or social media posts if they come from a candidate or another representative from the candidate's campaign organization.