

Setting the Record Straight

A personal note from Rep. Tarra Simmons

June 2026

If you've seen the headlines about “ethics complaints” with my name attached and want the full story, I want to talk with you directly. You deserve to hear what these are actually about, **not from a headline, but from me.**

If you only have a minute, here's the heart of it:

- I gave leftover campaign money to local nonprofits doing good work.
- The first complaint came down to a minor filing error. It has already been reviewed and dismissed.
- A second review is still underway, and I asked for a full public hearing because I have nothing to hide.

The fuller story is just as simple. I donated leftover campaign money to community nonprofits doing good work (this is legal to do), and my political opponents turned a paperwork technicality into a months-long spectacle. I've spent my career fighting for people who don't have power on their side, and I've learned that when you fight for change, you become a target.

A Few Things People Don't Realize About Ethics Complaints

Anyone can file an ethics complaint against an elected official: a political opponent, a donor to that opponent, anyone at all. It costs nothing to file, and the claim doesn't have to be fair or even true to get started. Once it's filed, the state is **required to investigate** and run it through a rigorous process, no matter how thin the allegation. I believe in that accountability. I'd never ask to be above the rules. But it also means the process can be used as a political weapon, where the accusation makes headlines today and the facts only catch up months later.

The First Complaint Has Already Been Dismissed

In December, a complaint was filed against me with the Public Disclosure Commission, the agency that oversees campaign finance. It came down to a **minor filing error**. For a while now I've donated surplus campaign funds to nonprofits doing good work in our community, and this was the first time it came to our attention that a nonprofit receiving those funds also has to be registered as a charity. The moment we understood that, we fixed it, and I asked my treasurer to audit our past giving so we could make it right everywhere.

The Commission found that **I did not personally benefit**, that I was fully cooperative, and that I had no prior violations. The matter was resolved with a **\$300 penalty** (the smallest category of penalty the PDC issues, reserved for minor technical errors) and **formally dismissed in May 2026.**

And it's worth remembering where this started. The complaint was filed by a **donor to my opponent's campaign**, and it was handed to the media before anyone had reviewed the facts. In fact, after it became public, the local Democrats named on it even voted to rescind it, but once a complaint is filed, the PDC is required to finish its review regardless, so it did. I'll let you draw your own conclusions about the timing.

The Second Review Is Still Underway, and I Asked for It

There is a separate complaint before the Legislative Ethics Board that grew out of my outside job and my dealings with a community nonprofit. I was offered the chance to quietly pay a small fine. I said no. I **asked for a full public hearing** instead, because I wanted the facts examined in the open rather than decided behind closed doors, for me and for other citizen-legislators who could face the same thing.

At the two-day public hearing in June, the case against me did not hold up. It rested on two witnesses: the woman who filed the complaint and one other key witness. Under oath, **both of them were contradicted** by other witnesses and by the evidence. The one genuinely neutral witness, the administrator from the state's court system, had no stake in the outcome, and he testified in my favor. No one showed, or even claimed, that I made a single dollar for myself. My attorney has filed a closing brief asking the Board to dismiss the complaint, and we're now waiting on their decision.

What This Was Always Really About

Strip away the noise, and here's what remains: I gave leftover campaign money **away**, to nonprofits serving our community, and a registration technicality got turned into a scandal. There are no criminal charges. There is no allegation that I profited. This was never about a lawmaker enriching herself. It was about a lawmaker giving money away to programs that help people like me get a second chance.

I'm proud to serve the community I grew up in, and I'm not going anywhere. This has all played out in the open, and you can read the [Seattle Times' coverage](#) of the hearing and my request to dismiss the case. I'd rather not spend my energy on anyone's motives. I'd rather spend it where it belongs: lowering costs for families, protecting access to health care, and serving the district I grew up in. Thank you for taking the time to hear the truth, and for standing with me.

With gratitude,

Tarra

The facts described here are drawn from the PDC's official dismissal letter (Case 184074, May 6, 2026) and the public record of the Legislative Ethics Board hearing. Learn more at electtarrasimmons.com.