



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C.

May 29, 2025

VIA UPS AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

gaby@montanademocrats.org

Sheila Hogan, Executive Director
Montana Democratic Party
303 N. Ewing St.
Helena, MT 59601

RE: MUR 8320
Zinke for Congress, *et al.*

Dear Ms. Hogan:

This is in reference to the complaint filed with the Federal Election Commission on October 3, 2024, concerning Zinke for Congress, *et al.* Based on that complaint, and after considering the circumstances of this matter and information provided in response to the complaint, the Commission determined to dismiss this matter and close the file effective May 29, 2025.

The General Counsel's Report, which more fully explains the basis for the Commission's decision, is enclosed. Documents related to the case will be placed on the public record today. *See* Disclosure of Certain Documents in Enforcement and Other Matters, 81 Fed. Reg. 50,702 (Aug. 2, 2016).

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended, allows a complainant to seek judicial review of the Commission's dismissal of this action within 60 days of the dismissal, which became effective today. *See* 52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(8).

Sincerely,

Lisa J. Stevenson
Acting General Counsel

Wanda D. Brown

BY: Wanda D. Brown
Assistant General Counsel

Enclosure
General Counsel's Report

1 **BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION**

2
3 **ENFORCEMENT PRIORITY SYSTEM**
4 **DISMISSAL REPORT**

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6 **MUR 8320**

Respondents: Zinke for Congress and Paul Kilgore
in his official capacity as treasurer
Ryan K. Zinke

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10 **Complaint Receipt Date:** Oct. 1, 2024

11 **Response Date:** Nov. 22, 2024

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15 **Alleged Statutory/**

16 **Regulatory Violations:**

52 U.S.C. § 30120(a)

11 C.F.R. § 110.11(c)

17
18 The Complaint alleges that Ryan K. Zinke, a 2024 candidate for Montana's 1st
19 Congressional District,¹ and his principal campaign committee, Zinke for Congress and Paul
20 Kilgore in his official capacity as treasurer (the "Committee"),² distributed a television
21 advertisement without an adequate disclaimer, in violation of the Federal Election Campaign Act of
22 1971, as amended.³ The Complaint alleges that the television advertisement, entitled "Public
23 Lands," included a written disclaimer displaying "Paid for by Zinke for Congress" and "Authorized
24 by Ryan Zinke," and a verbal approval by Zinke stating "I'm Ryan Zinke and I approve this
25 message," but did not display an adequate video or other image of Zinke during the verbal
26 approval.⁴

¹ Ryan K. Zinke, Amended Statement of Candidacy at 1 (Mar. 21, 2024), <https://docquery.fec.gov/pdf/731/202403219627385731/202403219627385731.pdf>.

² Zinke for Congress, Amended Statement of Organization at 2 (Mar. 21, 2024), <https://docquery.fec.gov/pdf/734/202403219627385734/202403219627385734.pdf>.

³ Compl. at 1 (Oct. 1, 2024).

⁴ *Id.* at 2. The Complaint includes a URL for the advertisement in question which does not appear to be active.

1 In Response, Zinke and the Committee argue that the advertisement in question displayed an
2 adequate disclaimer and verbal approval,⁵ that the advertisement does display an identifiable video
3 or image of Zinke during the verbal approval,⁶ and that the advertisement, even if there was a
4 technical violation, “contains sufficient identifying information . . . to prevent the public from being
5 misled as to who paid for it.”⁷ Respondents request that the Commission dismiss the Complaint.⁸

6 Based on its experience and expertise, the Commission has established an Enforcement
7 Priority System using formal, pre-determined scoring criteria to allocate agency resources and
8 assess whether particular matters warrant further administrative enforcement proceedings. These
9 criteria include (1) the gravity of the alleged violation, taking into account both the type of activity
10 and the amount in violation; (2) the apparent impact the alleged violation may have had on the
11 electoral process; (3) the complexity of the legal issues raised in the matter; and (4) recent trends in
12 potential violations and other developments in the law. This matter is rated as low priority for
13 Commission action after application of these pre-established criteria. Given that low rating and the
14 unlikelihood that the general public would have been confused as to whether the Committee paid for
15 and Zinke authorized the communication at issue, we recommend that the Commission dismiss the
16 Complaint, consistent with the Commission’s prosecutorial discretion to determine the proper
17 ordering of its priorities and use of agency resources.⁹ We also recommend that the Commission
18 close the file effective 30 days from the date the certification of this vote is signed (or on the next

⁵ Resp. at 7 (Nov. 22, 2024).

⁶ *Id.* at 5-6. The Response includes four screenshots displaying still images from the communication in question, two of Zinke’s face, one in profile, and a still image from the portion of the communication during the verbal approval. *Id.* at 3-5.

⁷ *Id.* at 7.

⁸ *Id.* at 6-7.

⁹ *Heckler v. Chaney*, 470 U.S. 821, 831-32 (1985).

MUR 8320 (Zinke for Congress, *et al.*)
EPS Dismissal Report
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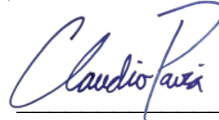
business day after the 30th day, if the 30th day falls on a weekend or holiday) and send the appropriate letters.

Lisa J. Stevenson
Acting General Counsel

April 15, 2025

Date

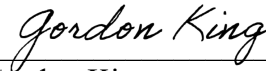
BY:



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