

McKenna bails out of scheduled interview with teachers

Teachers and other members of the Washington Education Association are deeply disappointed by Rob McKenna's last-minute decision to cancel his previously scheduled interview with the WEA Political Action Committee (WEA-PAC) and WEA representatives from across the state.

"Through this action, Rob McKenna has signaled to educators around the state, and to all who are concerned about the state of politics today, that he is not interested in genuine dialog," said WEA President Mary Lindquist. "It is regrettable that Mr. McKenna wishes to remain distant from those who are on the frontline of teaching every day. It is sadly disappointing that Mr. McKenna does not want to hear, firsthand, the challenges facing public education in our state."

WEA originally scheduled its gubernatorial candidate interviews for Nov. 12, and invited McKenna to participate on Oct. 18. McKenna's campaign said he had conflicts and could not attend. WEA offered several alternatives, including an early morning interview, Skype and meeting with a group of WEA-PAC representatives on a different day. McKenna's campaign declined all of those offers. To accommodate McKenna, WEA rescheduled the interviews for Dec. 3, and McKenna's campaign agreed to an 11 a.m. interview at the WEA office in Federal Way. Approximately 60 educators from around the state are scheduled to participate in the interview process.

McKenna declined to complete the written WEA-PAC questionnaire for gubernatorial candidates. The questionnaire focuses on issues of concern to educators and students, including overcrowded classes and school funding. On Nov. 8, McKenna's campaign manager, Randy Pepple, wrote, "In keeping with our campaign's approach to other endorsement processes which we know we will not win, we'll focus our limited time resources on meeting with your members, but save our time by not completing the questionnaire. Despite McKenna's refusal to answer written questions about public education, the scheduled Dec. 3 interview remained in place. On Nov. 30, Pepple wrote in an email to WEA, "The Attorney General and I will be at your office for the interview this Saturday at 11 am."

At 4:51 pm today, Dec. 2, Pepple emailed WEA and stated that McKenna was canceling his interview with the WEA-PAC Board.

The WEA-PAC Board and WEA members will interview gubernatorial candidate Jay Inslee at 11:30 am Saturday and issue a recommendation later in the day.

"It is deeply disappointing that Rob McKenna declined to meet with teachers, education support professionals and college faculty members," said WEA President Lindquist. "We tried very hard to accommodate his schedule, and even rescheduled our interview date at his request. WEA members sincerely wanted to hear Mr. McKenna's position on key education issues, and it would be good for him to hear from the people who educate our state's students."

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