

ATTRIBUTION STATEMENTS (DISCLAIMERS)

Attribution statements, commonly referred to as disclaimers, are statements required to be placed on any communication containing express advocacy in order to identify the person(s) who paid for and/or authorized the communication. [WIS. STAT. § 11.1303\(2\)](#).

Express advocacy refers to a communication that references a clearly identified candidate and unambiguously relates to the election or defeat of that candidate. Examples include “Vote for John Doe,” “Reelect your Incumbent Mayor,” or “Doe for City Council.” [WIS. STAT. § 11.0101\(11\)](#).

No disbursement by a candidate committee may be made anonymously and no contribution or disbursement may be made in a fictitious name or by one person or organization in the name of another. [WIS. STAT. § 11.1303\(1\)](#).

Every printed advertisement, billboard, handbill, sample ballot, television or radio advertisement, or other communication containing express advocacy which is paid for by any contribution or disbursement shall clearly identify its source. [WIS. STAT. § 11.1303\(2\)\(a\)](#).

Every communication containing express advocacy the cost of which is paid for or reimbursed by a committee, or for which a committee assumes responsibility, whether by accepting a contribution or making a disbursement, shall identify its source by the words "Paid for by" followed by the name of the committee making the payment or reimbursement or assuming responsibility for the communication and may include the name of the treasurer or other authorized agent of the committee. [WIS. STAT. § 11.1303\(2\)\(b\)](#).

Attribution statements are not required on communications containing express advocacy printed on small items on which the information required cannot be conveniently printed, including text messages, social media communications, and certain small advertisements on mobile phones. [WIS. STAT. § 11.1303\(2\)\(f\)](#). Attribution statements are also not required on business cards, buttons, pencils, pens, pins, skywriting, tickets, or small online ads and similar electronic communications where the language required could not conveniently be included, and that either link directly to a website that includes the required attribution, or provide an automatic display that includes the attribution. [WIS. ADMIN. CODE ETH 1.96\(5\)](#).

Formats for Disclaimers

When a communication is paid for by a candidate committee, the disclaimer must include the words “Paid for by,” followed by the name of the committee:

“Paid for by Friends of Mary Smith.”

The disclaimer may also include the name of the treasurer or other authorized agent:

“Paid for by Friends of Mary Smith for Mayor, James Jones, Treasurer.”

When a communication is paid for by another in coordination with a candidate committee, both the person making the payment and the committee accepting the in-kind contribution should be listed:

“Paid for by Citizens for Government, Authorized by Mary Smith for Governor.”

Attribution statements must be readable, legible, and readily accessible. [WIS. STAT. § 11.1303\(2\)\(g\)](#). That is, each individual letter or character must be clearly printed so that it can be easily understood, it can be read easily, and it can be seen without much difficulty. [WIS. ADMIN. CODE ETH § 1.96\(1\)](#). A disclaimer is evident to be readable, legible, and readily accessible if it meets all of the following requirements:

1. It appears in a sans-serif font.
2. The font is sufficiently large. On a written communication no larger than 8.5 inches by 11 inches, it is printed in at least 10-point font. On a written communication larger than 8.5 inches by 11 inches but smaller than 24 inches by 36 inches, it is printed in at least 12-point font. On a larger written communication, the letters are at least four percent of the vertical height of the written communication.
3. It appears in black text on a white background, or the contrast between the background color and the text color is at least as great as between the background color and text color of the largest text in the communication.
4. It remains visible for a period of at least four seconds.

[WIS. ADMIN. CODE ETH 1.96\(3\)](#).

All attribution statements shall be presented in a clear and conspicuous manner that gives the recipient of the communication adequate notice of the identity of the person making the payment or reimbursement or assuming responsibility for the communication. [WIS. ADMIN CODE ETH 1.96\(2\)](#).