

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE  
EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD

In the Matter of:

BRANDON CHAPMAN,  
Respondent.

No. 2009-063

STIPULATED FACTS,  
CONCLUSIONS AND ORDER

**I. STIPULATION**

THIS STIPULATION is entered into under WAC 292-100-090(1) between the Respondent, BRANDON CHAPMAN, and Board Staff of the WASHINGTON STATE EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD (Board) through MELANIE DeLEON, Executive Director. The following stipulated facts, conclusions, and agreed order will be binding upon the parties if fully executed, and if accepted by the Board without modification(s), and will not be binding if rejected by the Board, or if the Respondent does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, to the stipulation.

**Section 1: PROCEDURAL FACTS**

1.1. On September 8, 2009, the Executive Ethics Board received a referral from the State Auditor's Office (SAO) alleging that Brandon Chapman, an employee of the State of Washington, Department of Early Learning, may have violated state law when used state resources for personal benefit. The Board reviewed this referral and issued a complaint on March 12, 2010.

1.2. The Board is authorized under RCW 34.05.060 to establish procedures for attempting and executing informal settlement of matters in lieu of more formal proceedings under the Administrative Procedures Act, including adjudicative hearings. The Board has established such procedures under WAC 292-100-090.

1.3. Brandon Chapman understands that if Board staff proves any or all of the alleged violations at a hearing, the Board may impose sanctions, including a civil penalty under RCW 42.52.480(1)(b) of up to \$5,000, or the greater of three times the economic value of anything received or sought in violation of chapter 42.52 RCW, for each violation found. The Board may also order the payment of costs, including reasonable investigative costs, under RCW 42.52.480(1)(c).

1.4. Brandon Chapman recognizes that the evidence available to the Board staff is such that the Board may conclude he violated the Ethics in Public Service Act. Therefore, in the interest of seeking an informal and expeditious resolution of this matter, the parties agree to entry of the stipulated findings of fact, conclusions of law and agreed order set forth below.

1.5. Brandon Chapman waives the opportunity for a hearing, contingent upon acceptance of this stipulation by the Board, or his acceptance of any modification(s) proposed by the Board, pursuant to the provisions of WAC 292-100-090(2) which provides in part:

The board has the option of accepting, rejecting, or modifying the proposed stipulation or asking for additional facts to be presented. If the board accepts the stipulation or modifies the stipulation with the agreement of the respondent, the board shall enter an order in conformity with the terms of the stipulation. If the board rejects the stipulation or the respondent does not agree to the board's proposed modifications to the stipulation, the normal process will continue. The proposed stipulation and information obtained during formal settlement discussions shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing.

1.6. If the Board accepts this stipulation, the Board will release and discharge Brandon Chapman from all further ethics proceedings under chapter 42.52 RCW for matters arising out of the facts contained in the complaint in this matter, subject to payment of the full amount of the civil penalty due and owing, any other costs imposed, and compliance with all other terms and conditions of the agreed order. Brandon Chapman in turn agrees to release and discharge the Board, its officers, agents and employees from all claims, damages, and causes of action arising out of this complaint and this stipulation and agreed order.

1.7. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order does not purport to settle any other claims between Brandon Chapman and the Washington State Executive Ethics Board, the State of Washington, or other third party, which may be filed in the future.

1.8. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order is enforceable under RCW 34.05.578 and any other applicable statutes or rules.

1.9. If the Board rejects this stipulation, or if Brandon Chapman does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, Brandon Chapman waives any objection to participation at any subsequent hearing by any Board member to whom this stipulation was presented for approval under WAC 292-100-090(2). Further, Brandon Chapman understands and agrees that this proposed stipulation and information obtained during any formal settlement discussions held between the parties shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing, unless otherwise agreed by the parties.

## **Section 2: FINDINGS OF FACT**

2.1. Brandon Chapman is a Program Specialist 5 for the Department of Early Learning.

2.2. On February 25, 2009, the State Auditor's Office (SAO), received a Whistleblower Complaint alleging that Brandon Chapman was using state resources for personal gain.

2.3. During its investigation of the Whistleblower complaint, the SAO found reasonable cause to believe an improper governmental action occurred by Brandon Chapman's use of state resources to contact individuals to ask about employment as a writer; to receive and/or send emails pertaining to household bills, mortgage and insurance issues; to send an audio file of a sports broadcast he had done to friends and family; and to access sports, social network, retail, banking and personal email websites.

2.4. On August 26, 2009, Brandon Chapman received a letter of reprimand for his inappropriate use of state resources from DEL Communications Manager Amy Blondin.

2.5. The SAO published its findings in Whistleblower Report No. 1002099 dated September 8, 2009 and referred the matter to the Executive Ethics Board (Board) on that date.

2.6. On March 12, 2010, the Board considered the SAO findings and initiated an ethics complaint.

### **Section 3: CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

3.1. Pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, the Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction over Brandon Chapman and over the subject matter of this complaint.

3.2. Pursuant to WAC 292-100-090(1), the parties have the authority to resolve this matter under the terms contained herein, subject to Board approval.

3.4. A state officer or employee is prohibited under RCW 42.52.160 from using state resources for personal benefit.

3.5. Based on Findings of Fact 2.1 through 2.6, Brandon Chapman used state resources in violation of RCW 42.52.160.

3.7. The Board is authorized to impose sanctions for violations to the Ethics Act pursuant to RCW 42.52.360. The Board has set forth criteria in WAC 292-120-030 for imposing sanctions and consideration of any mitigating or aggravating factors.

### **Section 4: AGGRAVATING AND MITIGATING FACTORS**

4.1 It is a mitigating factor that Brandon Chapman received a letter of reprimand from his supervisor.

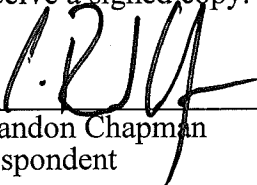
### **Section 5. AGREED ORDER**

5.1. For the violation of RCW 42.52.160, Brandon Chapman will pay a civil penalty in the amount of five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

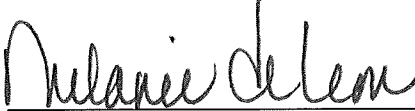
5.2. The civil penalty of \$500.00 is payable to the state Executive Ethics Board within forty-five (45) days of approval of this Stipulation and Order by the Board, or as otherwise agreed to by the parties.

**CERTIFICATION**

I, Brandon Chapman, hereby certify that I have read this Stipulation and Agreed Order in its entirety; that my counsel of record, if any, has fully explained the legal significance and consequence of it; that I fully understand and agree to all of it; and that it may be presented to the Board without my appearance. I knowingly and voluntarily waive my right to a hearing in this matter; and if the Board accepts the Stipulation and Agreed Order, I understand that I will receive a signed copy.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Brandon Chapman                      08/13/10  
Respondent                              Date

Stipulated to and presented by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Melanie deLeon                      8-24-10  
Executive Director                      Date

**II. ORDER**

Having reviewed the proposed Stipulation, WE, THE STATE OF WASHINGTON EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD, pursuant to WAC 292-100-090, HEREBY ORDER that the Stipulation is

✓

ACCEPTED in its entirety;

\_\_\_\_\_

REJECTED in its entirety;

\_\_\_\_\_

MODIFIED. This Stipulation will become the Order of the Board if the

Respondent approves\* the following modification(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

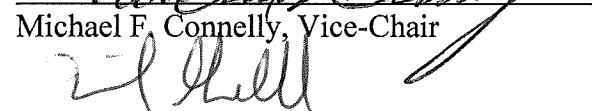
DATED this 17<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2010.



Linnaea Jablonski, Chair



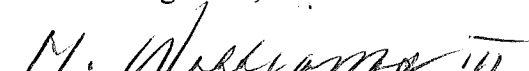
Michael F. Connelly, Vice-Chair



Neil Gorrell, Member



Martin Biegelman, Member



Matthew Williams III, Member

\* I, \_\_\_\_\_, accept/do not accept (circle one) the proposed modification(s).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brandon Chapman, Respondent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date