3517.21 Unfair political campaign activities

(A) No person, during the course of any campaign for nomination or election to public office or office of a political party, shall knowingly and with intent to affect the outcome of such campaign do any of the following:

(1) Serve, or place another person to serve, as an agent or employee in the election campaign organization of a candidate for the purpose of acting to impede the conduct of the candidate's campaign for nomination or election or of reporting information to the employee's employer or the agent's principal without the knowledge of the candidate or the candidate's organization;

(2) Promise, offer, or give any valuable thing or valuable benefit to any person who is employed by or is an agent of a candidate or a candidate's election campaign organization for the purpose of influencing the employee or agent with respect to the improper discharge of the employee's or agent's campaign duties or to obtain information about the candidate or the candidate's campaign organization.

(B) No person, during the course of any campaign for nomination or election to public office or office of a political party, by means of campaign materials, including sample ballots, an advertisement on radio or television or in a newspaper or periodical, a public speech, press release, or otherwise, shall knowingly and with intent to affect the outcome of such campaign do any of the following:

(1) Use the title of an office not currently held by a candidate in a manner that implies that the candidate does currently hold that office or use the term "re-elect" when the candidate has never been elected at a primary, general, or special election to the office for which he or she is a candidate;

(2) Make a false statement concerning the formal schooling or training completed or attempted by a candidate; a degree, diploma, certificate, scholarship, grant, award, prize, or honor received, earned, or held by a candidate; or the period of time during which a candidate attended any school, college, community technical school, or institution;

(3) Make a false statement concerning the professional, occupational, or vocational licenses held by a candidate, or concerning any position the candidate held for which the candidate received a salary or wages;

(4) Make a false statement that a candidate or public official has been indicted or convicted of a theft offense, extortion, or other crime involving financial corruption or moral turpitude;

(5) Make a statement that a candidate has been indicted for any crime or has been the subject of a finding by the Ohio elections commission without disclosing the outcome of any legal proceedings resulting from the indictment or finding;

(6) Make a false statement that a candidate or official has a record of treatment or confinement for mental disorder;

(7) Make a false statement that a candidate or official has been subjected to military discipline for criminal misconduct or dishonorably discharged from the armed services;

(8) Falsely identify the source of a statement, issue statements under the name of another person without authorization, or falsely state the endorsement of or opposition to a candidate by a person or publication;

(9) Make a false statement concerning the voting record of a candidate or public official;

(10) Post, publish, circulate, distribute, or otherwise disseminate a false statement concerning a candidate, either knowing the same to be false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not, if the statement is designed to promote the election, nomination, or defeat of the candidate.

As used in this section, "voting record" means the recorded "yes" or "no" vote on a bill, ordinance, resolution, motion, amendment, or confirmation.

(C) Before a prosecution may commence under this section, a complaint shall be filed with the Ohio elections commission under section 3517.153 of the Revised Code. After the complaint is filed, the commission shall proceed in accordance with sections 3517.154 to 3517.157 of the Revised Code.