

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nhatt Nichols, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, June 3, 2026.

Today we have the story of how a public records request ended in a spread of misinformation to local parents, as reported on by Rachael Nutting.

Back in April, a local man named Timothy S. Hawley used mailing addresses obtained from the Port Townsend School District to send cards containing anti-vaccination rhetoric and transphobic messaging to families across the district. Recipients widely reported on social media feeling targeted and violated by the mailers. The letter left many parents with the same question: How was this legal?

The short answer is that Washington's Public Records Act, a law designed to make government transparent, has a gap regarding "directory information" such as student addresses. Hawley is a longtime resident of Port Townsend. In the 2025 election cycle, he ran for the Port Townsend School District No. 50 Board of Directors as an at-large candidate. His voters' pamphlet statement painted a picture of an education professional, stating that he's a lifelong resident of Port Townsend with 23 years of experience in education. Hawley's 2025 campaign for the school board was unsuccessful.

Hawley runs a nonprofit called Deeper Learning & Development Associates, which he described as an organization that "sends out information to parents on conditions affecting young students that impair their learning skills, also information regarding parental involvement in education, among other valuable topics." Hawley did not respond to requests for comment from the *Beacon*.

The purpose of Washington's Public Records Act is straightforward: to make the government transparent. The law requires all state and local government agencies to make public records available for inspection and copying unless a specific statutory exemption applies. School districts maintain a wide range of records about students – academic files, disciplinary records, health information, and contact details. Under the Public Records Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, much of this information is protected. But not all of it.

"Directory information" – typically defined as a student's name, address, phone number, and similar basic contact details – has historically been treated as less sensitive. The reasoning goes that this is the kind of information you might find in a school directory or yearbook. Under Washington law, school districts are legally required to release directory information to anyone who requests it, unless a parent has explicitly opted out.

Under the Public Records Act, the district had two options:

1. Release the addresses (for families who had not opted out)
2. Deny the request and face a potential lawsuit

The district chose option one, not because officials wanted to, but because the law gave them no choice.

Once Hawley had the addresses, he sent cards to families. The nature of the messaging on the cards – anti-vaccine and transphobic – aligns with a broader national movement of activists using public records laws to target schools over health and diversity policies.

Parents discovered two separate cards in their mailbox from Hawley; One included anti-vaccination misinformation, the other included misinformation about gender care. The anti-vaccination card quoted an online blog called Science, Public Health Policy and the Law. When Robert F. Kennedy produced what he

described as results from a study about anti-vaccination during his confirmation hearing as US Secretary of Health and Human Resources, he was referencing this blog.

The other card included QR codes and a website operated by a group called Genspect, which has been formally designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center for spreading transphobic misinformation.

Hawley is not the first person to weaponize the Public Records Act against a school district. A South Whidbey man, Eric Hood, had made a “career” out of targeting schools, hospitals, counties and cities with public records requests, forcing districts to spend thousands of staff hours responding to demands for emails, calendars, and internal communications. In 2021, Hood was reported as having been awarded \$1 million dollars in Public Records Act lawsuits this way.

The same dynamic is at play here. The Public Records Act doesn’t require requesters to have a legitimate purpose. They don’t have to be journalists, researchers or even district residents. Jefferson County and the City of Port Townsend are facing the same misuse of the Public Records Act. Anyone can ask for almost anything – and agencies are required to respond within a certain timeframe. The public records act serves a vital function. Without it, the government would be less accountable, corruption would be harder to expose and citizens would have fewer tools to hold officials responsible.

But the public records act was never intended to give activists a mailing list for misinformation campaigns, and it was never intended to force school districts to choose between following the law and protecting families.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. You can submit ideas to the *Beacon* through info@jeffcobeacon.com. This is editor Nhatt Nichols. Thanks for listening.