

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE
EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD

In the Matter of:

Monica Ruiz

Respondent.

No. 2012-12

STIPULATED FACTS,
CONCLUSIONS AND ORDER

I. STIPULATION

THIS STIPULATION is entered into under WAC 292-100-090(1) between the Respondent, MONICA RUIZ, 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 January 30, 2012, the Executive Ethics Board (Board) received an agency referral from the Employment Security Department (ESD) alleging that Monica Ruiz, a WorkSource Specialist, may have violated the Ethics in Public Service Act by using state resources for personal gain. The Board initiated a complaint on March 16, 2012.

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. Monica Ruiz 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. Monica Ruiz recognizes that the evidence available to the Board staff is such that the Board may conclude she 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. Monica Ruiz waives the opportunity for a hearing, contingent upon acceptance of this stipulation by the Board, or her 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 Monica Ruiz 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. Monica Ruiz 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 Monica Ruiz 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 Monica Ruiz does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, this matter will be scheduled for an administrative hearing in front of the Board and Monica Ruiz waives any objection to participation by any Board member at any subsequent hearing to whom this stipulation was presented for approval under WAC 292-100-090(2). Further, Monica Ruiz 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. Ms. Ruiz was employed by ESD as a WorkSource Specialist for all times pertinent to this investigation.

2.2. In October 2011, ESD discovered that Ms. Ruiz was using her state controlled area network (SCAN) authorization code to make calls unrelated to her work within the Workforce Development Area (WDA) 11 or the agency.

2.3. On October 14, 2011, Joe Perez, Operations Manager, ESD, met with Ms. Ruiz regarding the allegation that she used her SCAN authorization code to make personal phone calls. Mr. Perez provided Ms. Ruiz with copies of her SCAN call logs for October 2010 through October 2011 and was asked to identify all personal phone calls. Ms Ruiz identified over 100 personal calls.

2.4. All ESD personnel are required to review the monthly SCAN call logs for accuracy and correctness. The employee must then certify each log, by signature, indicating the charges are true, correct and were made in support of legitimate state business (ESD Policy 2016). Ms. Ruiz signed the 12 phone logs in question indicating that all of the calls were for legitimate state business.

2.5. Ms. Ruiz signed the "Required Policies Check-off List" every year dating back to May 2006. In signing the "Required Policies Check-off List," Ms. Ruiz acknowledged that she had reviewed and was familiar with the agencies policies pertaining to the use of state resources.

2.6. On February 2, 2012, Ms. Ruiz received a written reprimand for violation of ESD policies #1016, #2016, and state ethics law RCW 42.52.160 and WAC 292-110-010.

Section 3: CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

3.1. Pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, the Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction over Monica Ruiz 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.

3.3. The Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW, prohibits state employees from using state resources for their benefit. RCW 42.52.160(1) states:

No state officer or state employee may employ or use any person, money, or property under the officer's or employee's official control or direction, or in his or her official custody, for the private benefit or gain of the officer, employee, or another.

3.4. Based on Findings of Fact 2.1 through 2.5, Monica Ruiz used state resources to make personal phone calls, in violation of RCW 42.52.160 and WAC 292-110-010.

3.5. 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

In determining the appropriateness of the civil penalty, the Board reviewed the criteria in WAC 292-120-030. It is a mitigating factor that Monica Ruiz received discipline from her agency regarding these violations. (See section 2.6)

Section 5: AGREED ORDER

5.1 For the violation RCW 42.52.160, Monica Ruiz will pay a civil penalty in the amount of, two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250.00).

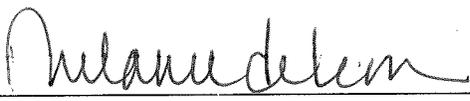
5.2 The civil penalty of \$250.00 is payable in full, to the State Executive Ethics Board within 45 days after this stipulation is accepted by the Board, or as otherwise agreed to by the parties.

II. CERTIFICATION

I, Monica Ruiz, 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.

 7/9/12
MONICA RUIZ Date
Respondent

Stipulated to and presented by:


Melanie deLeon Date
Executive Director

