

# The Bellingham Herald

## Politics Blog

### Nonprofit conducts background checks on candidates

Posted by Ralph Schwartz on October 9, 2014

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Schools routinely conduct checks on parent volunteers, seeking to flag sex offenders or serious criminals before allowing them to have contact with kids. Running for political office is not the same thing, but the act of putting your name on a ballot confers a certain message: Trust me, I want to be in the government.

Background checks are not routine for political candidates. Voters must rely on their own judgment, any initiative taken by their local media to expose criminal histories, or the investigations undertaken by a candidate's opposition.

Entering the breach is a nonprofit called **CandidateVerification**, which has gotten dozens of Washington state candidates to submit to a check of their backgrounds, including past criminal and civil cases, and education and employment histories.

As CandidateVerification board members Noel Frame and Erin McCallum said in an Oct. 2 op-ed in **The Seattle Times**,

*"On more than one occasion, candidates across Washington state — Democrats, independents and Republicans — have been caught inflating their résumés. According to ADP, 53 percent of all job applications contain some type of résumé fraud. The majority of cases involve discrepancies around job titles, degrees earned or professional credentials. The results from our 2014 candidates corroborate those numbers."*

No one in Washington's 40th or 42nd legislative districts — the two that include Whatcom County — has participated in the background check so far. The only local candidate posted on CandidateVerification's website is **Pedro Celis**, Republican running against Suzan DelBene for the Congressional District 1 seat, which represents north Whatcom.

Celis came up clean.

Frame and McCallum conclude their **Seattle Times** op-ed with this:

*We encourage all voters, political donors, elected officials, activists, political action committees (PACs), parties and the news media to join the movement. Together we can build on the rich history of government transparency in Washington state for others to follow.*

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