

# Lt. Gov. Brad Owen chastises fellow Democrat seeking to replace him

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**In a lengthy letter dated Tuesday, Owen wrote that he was disappointed and concerned about the campaign with fellow Democrat Sen. Cyrus Habib of Kirkland.**

OLYMPIA — Washington Lt. Gov. Brad Owen is taking a parting shot at a fellow Democrat seeking to replace him.

[In his letter](#) dated Tuesday, Owen wrote that he was disappointed and concerned about the [campaign of state Sen. Cyrus Habib](#), D-Kirkland.

Owen bemoaned “the statements, promises and commitments that you have made which I feel will be impossible to keep and are in fact not within the scope of the job.”

It prompted a strong rebuke from Habib, who described Owen’s letter as having “numerous inaccurate statements.”

Owen, [who is retiring](#) after 20 years in the office, called Habib’s campaign platform “Donald Trump-type proposals to get elected to office.”

In an email to media, Owen wrote that he didn’t intend to get involved in the race, but Habib “has been going so far out of line with unsupportable commitments to gain endorsements,” that he decided to speak out.

Among a litany of complaints, Owen contended that Habib has said that as lieutenant governor he wouldn’t sign a budget bill if it didn’t comply with the state Supreme Court’s order on K-12 education funding, known as [the McCleary decision](#).

The lieutenant governor, who also is president of the Senate, does sign bills to confirm they have passed that chamber. But Owen told Habib in his letter, “If you wish to veto legislation, perhaps you should run for Governor.”

Owen also accused Habib of wanting to use the office toward “implementing your partisan agenda.”

And he also blasted Habib’s “very limited experience in the House and Senate” and his “youthful inexperience and lack of familiarity with the duties of the office [he is] seeking.”

In a written response, Habib said he has never said he would use the office to “advance a partisan agenda,” nor has ever suggested he would veto a bill.

“Only the governor can do that,” Habib said. However, he continued, “I have said that I would use every tool at the disposal of the lieutenant governor to oppose an unconstitutional budget that doesn’t meet the court’s order.”

Habib has said he would push the state to comply with the McCleary order, and “that shouldn’t be partisan,” he said Wednesday.

Elected to the state House in 2012 and to the Senate in 2014, Habib has previously praised Owen’s work on trade and economic development and said he wants to build on that — and also advocate for state tourism.

But in his statement, Habib also took a shot at Owen, saying the state deserves a lieutenant governor who will “keep to the highest ethical standards, show up to work five days a week, and use the office to address the pressing challenges the state faces.”

Owen in 2014 settled a case with the Washington State Executive Ethics Board after a complaint that [he used state resources](#) for his now-defunct nonprofit organization Strategies For Youth.

The settlement imposed a \$15,000 fine, of which Owen had to pay only \$10,000 — in monthly installments — as long as he committed no other violations under that part of the ethics law for two years.

Owen admitted to the ethics board that the nonprofit's quarterly board meetings were conducted in his state office and that state staffers scheduled some of its activities.

In addition to serving as president of the Senate, the lieutenant governor becomes the acting governor whenever the governor leaves the state or is unable to serve.

Along with Habib, 10 other candidates are running for the lieutenant governor position. The top two candidates in the Aug. 2 primary will move on to the November election.

*Information from The Seattle Times archives is included in this report. Joseph O'Sullivan: 360-236-8268 or [josullivan@seattletimes.com](mailto:josullivan@seattletimes.com). On Twitter [@OlympiaJoe](https://twitter.com/OlympiaJoe)*