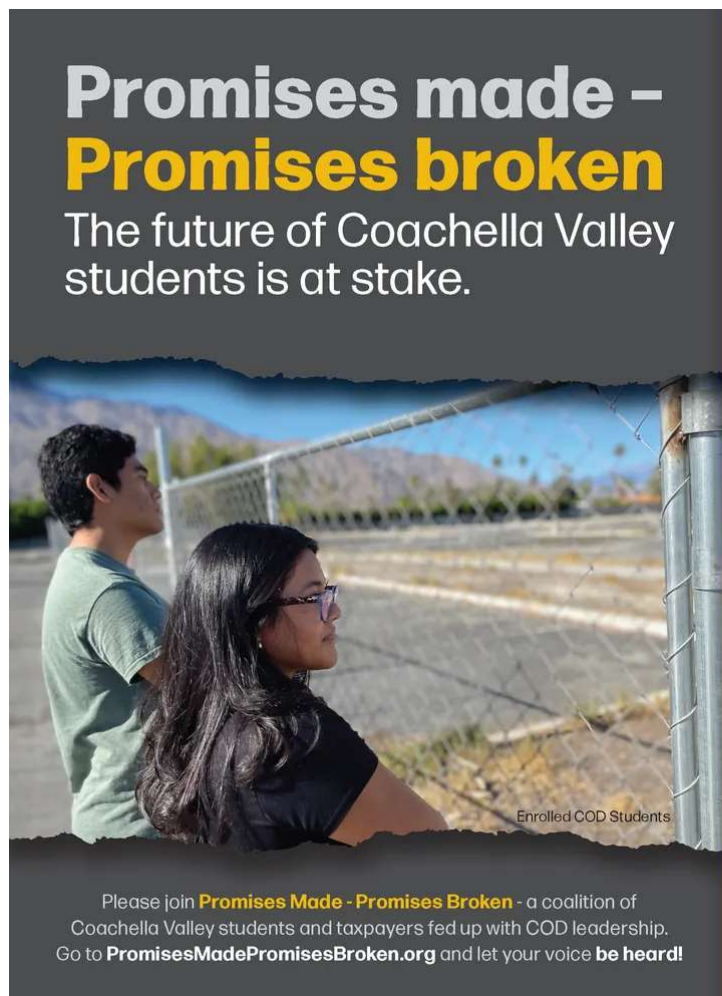


# COD's critics should stop hiding their identities, practice the transparency they preach



**Promises made – Promises broken**  
The future of Coachella Valley students is at stake.

Enrolled COD Students

Please join **Promises Made - Promises Broken** - a coalition of Coachella Valley students and taxpayers fed up with COD leadership. Go to [PromisesMadePromisesBroken.org](http://PromisesMadePromisesBroken.org) and let your voice **be heard!**

## Where is our money?

In 2004 and 2016, taxpayers voted to approve two College of the Desert (COD) Bond Measures totaling **\$950 million**. Voters and future students were promised a 400,000 sf Tahquitz Canyon Palm Springs college campus by 2022 and a Cathedral City auto repair campus on Perez Road.

## Where are our campuses?

- Palm Springs campus \$43 Million wasted and project **ABANDONED**
- Cathedral City Roadrunner Auto Technology campus \$5 Million wasted and project **CANCELLED**
- Valley-wide Restaurant/Hotel Management School **ABANDONED**
- Indio full campus **STALLED**
- Thermal and Mecca campuses **ABANDONED**
- Education for Coachella Valley students **CANCELLED**

## Failed COD leadership means it takes **FOUR years** for students to earn their two-year degrees.

Demand COD President Martha Garcia and the COD Trustees tell the truth about what they are doing with OUR money.

Coachella Valley students and taxpayers deserve what they have been promised.

A lawyer for College of the Desert recently prepared a presentation calling out a group of critics for its lack of transparency.

Was this like the pot calling the kettle black? Why, yes. But it doesn't mean she was wrong.

“Promises Made – Promises Broken,” a self-described “watchdog” group, has spent months [accusing college trustees and management of lying to the public](#) about major projects, including the long-promised Palm Springs campus. Much of the criticism is well deserved.

But we don't know who's funding Promises Made – Promises Broken, nor what unspoken motivations they might have. And that's worrisome.

One of the group's founders, Bruce Hoban, has repeatedly refused to disclose how many other members it has or who they are. He also won't say how much money the group has or who donated it, although the money has been enough to fund mailers and [a social media ad campaign](#).

That kind of secrecy breeds mistrust, just like the secrecy COD leaders have displayed, which we've [repeatedly written about](#).

As a public agency, COD is legally required to be transparent in ways that a private group like Promises Made – Promises Broken is not. As a “501(c)(4)” group, officially called a social welfare organization, it can keep donors secret.

But people who enter the political fray should be honest about who they are. Anonymous political attacks funded by shadowy groups that can keep their donors secret continue to erode our democracy.

It may well be that Promises Made – Promises Broken is just a group of concerned valley residents. If so, the group should have no problem releasing its donor list — whether the law requires it or not.

The issue came to light again this month when a lawyer for COD [accused Promises Made – Promises Broken of violating political transparency laws](#) by not disclosing donors.

Like so many things done by COD leadership lately, the attack was clumsy and botched.

The lawyer, Meredith Brown, appeared to wrongly believe the college’s elected trustees are on the ballot in June. She wrote in a presentation that Promises Made – Promises Broken had sent mailers trying to influence the outcome of a political contest “within the 60 days prior to an election.”

That’s not true; trustees are not on the ballot until November. After a lawyer for Promises Made – Promises Broken pointed this out and made veiled legal threats, COD quickly backtracked on plans to have trustees consider Brown’s presentation.

To fight back, Promises Made – Promises Broken engaged a Los Angeles lawyer who specializes in campaign law, further suggesting that it has deep pockets.

The group also has attracted support from powerful people: City council members from both Cathedral City and Palm Springs [attended a virtual meeting it organized in February](#).

But we have no idea how much money the group has raised or what it will do with it, and the story about its membership has shifted subtly.

When it launched in December, [Hoban said it was](#) “a bunch of very active, concerned citizens of Palm Springs.” He added that 10 people were directly involved, plus “a wide circle of people we are talking to.”

Now [its website describes it](#) as “a coalition of East & West Coachella Valley students and taxpayers” — not just Palm Springs residents, in other words.

[State records show](#) Promises Made – Promises Broken was formally incorporated on Feb. 15, listing its principal address as a mail drop in Palm Springs. Its purpose: “to educate residents of the Coachella Valley about the College of the Desert’s promises that have not been fulfilled in connection with two approved bond measures and to support public policies that ensure those promises are honored by its governing board.”

Last week, Hoban told The Desert Sun’s Jonathan Horwitz the group has “a lot” of members, which could mean just about anything.

And apparently it’s looking for more; [its website says](#) it wants “enthusiastic volunteers.”

Whoever these “concerned citizens” are: If you want to be taken seriously, step forward and practice what you preach.