

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION**

*In re. Audit of Laura Devlin for State Representative*

File No. 2017-041B

**AGREEMENT CONTAINING A CONSENT ORDER**

This Agreement by and between Loretta J. Chory, Town of Trumbull, State of Connecticut, hereinafter referred to as Respondent, and the undersigned authorized representative of the State Elections Enforcement Commission, is entered into in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes § 4-177 (c) and Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies § 9-7b-54. In accordance herewith, the parties agree that:

1. The Commission performed an in-depth review of the bank records and other financial documents of the *Laura Devlin for State Representative* candidate committee after the committee's selection in the random audit lottery conducted following the 2016 election cycle. Based on the findings in that audit, the Commission referred this matter to the enforcement unit for additional investigation.
2. The Commission performed an in-depth review of the expenditures of the *Laura Devlin for State Representative* candidate committee after the committee's selection in the random audit lottery conducted following the 2016 election cycle. Laura Devlin established the committee in 2016 to support her nomination for election as a candidate in the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly district.<sup>1</sup> She named Loretta Chory as the treasurer of the committee.<sup>2</sup> The committee opted to participate in the Citizens' Elections Program.<sup>3</sup> The Commission approved a grant from the Citizens Election Fund totaling \$19,705, which was received by the committee on July 8, 2016.<sup>4</sup>
3. The 2016 General Election occurred on Nov. 8, 2016. The committee contacted the commission on or about November 22, 2016 – 14 days after the election – to ask about holding a post-election party. Commission staff advised the treasurer that the committee

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<sup>1</sup> See SEEC Form 1 – Registration of Candidate Committee (*Laura Devlin for State Representative*, Feb. 4, 2016) (reflecting establishment of candidate committee by Laura Devlin and appointment of Loretta J. Chory as treasurer).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> See SEEC Form CEP 10 – Affidavit of Intent to Abide by Expenditure Limits and Other Citizens' Election Program Requirements (*Laura Devlin for State Representative*, March 11, 2016) (reflecting intent of candidate and treasurer to participate in Citizens' Election Program and follow voluntary program rules).

<sup>4</sup> See SEEC Form 30 – Itemized Campaign Finance Disclosure Statement: October 10 Report (*Laura Devlin for State Representative*, Oct. 5, 2016) (reporting grant received from Citizens' Election Fund on July 8, 2016).

could not host a party because the statutory 14-day deadline for such an event had passed.<sup>5</sup>

4. Instead of hosting a party, the candidate committee purchased 14 gift cards to the restaurant where they had hoped to host the party. Each of the gift cards was valued at \$30. Twelve of the gift cards were given to volunteers/campaign workers with the remaining two going to treasurer Chory, one for her husband and one for herself as both were also volunteers/workers on the campaign. The treasurer responded to the investigation saying that this purchase was an “oversight,” but she acknowledged that she had contacted the commission about hosting a post-election party and was told that she could not do so. She did not discuss gift cards with the Commission at that time and said she did not realize that the committee could not give gifts to committee workers in excess of \$5.
5. The General Assembly added subparagraph (F) to General Statutes § 9-608 (e) (1) in 2011.<sup>6</sup> That subparagraph codified the limitation on post-election parties and went into effect on January 1, 2012. Qualified candidate committees must hold these parties within 14 days of the election, which would have been no later than November 22 in 2016.
6. In addition to regulations on post-election meals, gifts to committee workers from qualified candidate committees are limited to \$5.<sup>7</sup> The regulations for qualified candidate committees also prohibit post-election bonuses of any kind.<sup>8</sup>
7. The Commission’s audit of the candidate committee also indicated that the treasurer had failed to provide a copy of a complete contract with a service provider. The committee provided a contract for some of the service providers but did not supply a contract for all of the workers who were paid more than \$100 for their services.
8. All candidate committees must enter into contracts with service providers who will earn more than \$100 for their services that specify the amount that a service provider will charge and the type of work that the service provider will perform.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See General Statutes § 9-608 (e)(1)(F) (requiring post-election thank you events to occur no later than fourteen days after election or primary).

<sup>6</sup> See Public Act 11-48, Sec. 290.

<sup>7</sup> See Regulations, Conn. State Agencies, § 9-706-2 (b)(7) (limiting gifts of any kind to less than \$5).

<sup>8</sup> See Regulations, Conn. State Agencies, § 9-706-2 (b)(11) (prohibiting payments of post-election bonuses).

<sup>9</sup> See Regulations, Conn. State Agencies, § 9-607-1 (a)(1) (requiring written, pre-performance service agreements for all service providers who earn more than \$100).

9. General Statutes § 9-7b provides in part:

The State Elections Enforcement Commission shall have the following duties and powers: . . .

(2) To levy a civil penalty not to exceed . . . (D) two thousand dollars per offense or twice the amount of any improper payment or contribution, whichever is greater, against

10. As stated above, the Commission has the authority to impose a civil penalty of as much as \$2,000 for each offense of Connecticut's General Statutes regarding campaign finance but it can also reduce that penalty where circumstances warrant such leniency.<sup>10</sup>

11. Respondent admits all jurisdictional facts and agrees that this Agreement and Order shall have the same force and effect as a final decision and Order entered into after a full hearing and shall become final when adopted by the Commission.

12. Respondent waives:

- a) Any further procedural steps;
- b) The requirement that the Commission's decision contain a statement of findings of fact and conclusions of law, separately stated; and
- c) All rights to seek judicial review or otherwise to challenge or contest the validity of the Order entered into pursuant to this Agreement.

13. It is understood and agreed that this Agreement will be submitted to the Commission for consideration at its next meeting and, if the Commission does not accept it, it is withdrawn and may not be used as an admission by the Respondent in any subsequent hearing, if the same becomes necessary.

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<sup>10</sup> See Regs., Conn. State Agencies § 9-7b-48 (laying out standards for mitigation of civil penalties).

**ORDER**

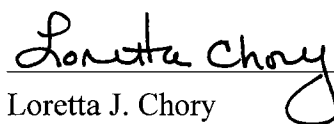
IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the Respondent Loretta J. Chory shall pay a civil penalty of \$500 and that in the future that she will strictly comply with the requirements of General Statutes §§ 9-607 and 9-608 as well as the regulations governing campaign financing.

The Respondent

For the State of Connecticut

By:

By:

  
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Loretta J. Chory  
26 Dale Road  
Trumbull, CT 06611

Michael J. Brandi, Esq.  
Executive Director and General Counsel and  
Authorized Representative of the  
State Elections Enforcement Commission  
20 Trinity St., Suite 101  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dated: 9/11/2018 \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: 9/13/18 \_\_\_\_\_

Adopted this 19<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2018 at Hartford, Connecticut by vote of the Commission.

  
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~~Anthony J. Castagno, Chairman~~  
By Order of the Commission  
Salvatore A. Bramante CO-Chair