

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Commission Initiated Investigation

File No. 2018-050C

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Commission initiated this investigation pursuant to General Statutes § 9-7b. The investigation concerned whether individuals had made or accepted contributions to the *Steve Obsitnik for Governor* candidate committee in the name of another.^{1 2} The following are the Commission's findings of fact and conclusions of law:

1. On or about October 1, 2017, Respondent Stephen "Steve" Obsitnik registered *the Steve Obsitnik for Governor* candidate committee with the Commission.
2. From on or about October 1, 2017 through on or about July 25, 2018, Respondent Joseph Sledge was the treasurer of Steve Obsitnik for Governor.
3. At all times relevant hereto Respondent John Corey Steinberg was a volunteer and/or a paid employee of the *Steve Obsitnik for Governor* candidate committee.
4. The *Steve Obsitnik for Governor* candidate committee applied for and received a grant from the Citizens' Election Program.
5. General Statutes § 9-622 provides that the following persons shall be guilty of an illegal practice:

(7) Any person who, directly or indirectly, individually or through another person, makes a payment or promise of payment to a treasurer in a name other than the person's own, and any treasurer who knowingly receives a payment or promise of payment, or enters or causes the same to be entered in the person's accounts in any other name than that of the person by whom such payment or promise of payment is made;

. . . .

(9) Any person who offers or receives a cash contribution in excess of one hundred dollars to promote the success or defeat of any political party, candidate or referendum question;

¹ Allegations concerning Respondents Andrew Robert Grant and Jenna Hayward are addressed in a separate document.

² Allegations concerning alleged coordination between the *Steve Obsitnik for Governor candidate committee* and the independent expenditure only political committee *FixCT, Inc.* shall be addressed in a separate document.

6. General Statutes § 9-608 (c) (2) – (3) details what information and certifications contributors are required to provide when making a contribution to a committee under the jurisdiction of the Commission and provides:

(2) Each contributor described in subparagraph (F), (G), (H) or (I) of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall, at the time the contributor makes such a contribution, provide the information that the treasurer is required to include under said subparagraph in the statement filed under subsection (a), (e) or (f) of this section. Notwithstanding any provision of subdivision (2) of section 9-7b, any contributor described in subparagraph (F) of subdivision (1) of this subsection who does not provide such information at the time the contributor makes such a contribution and any treasurer shall not be subject to the provisions of subdivision (2) of section 9-7b. If a treasurer receives a contribution from an individual which separately, or in the aggregate, is in excess of one thousand dollars and the contributor has not provided the information required by said subparagraph (G) or if a treasurer receives a contribution from an individual to or for the benefit of any candidate's campaign for nomination at a primary or election to the office of chief executive officer of a town, city or borough, which separately, or in the aggregate, is in excess of four hundred dollars and the contributor has not provided the information required by said subparagraph (I), the treasurer: (i) Not later than three business days after receiving the contribution, shall send a request for such information to the contributor by certified mail, return receipt requested; (ii) shall not deposit the contribution until the treasurer obtains such information from the contributor, notwithstanding the provisions of section 9-606; and (iii) shall return the contribution to the contributor if the contributor does not provide the required information not later than fourteen days after the treasurer's written request or the end of the reporting period in which the contribution was received, whichever is later. Any failure of a contributor to provide the information which the treasurer is required to include under said subparagraph (F) or (H), which results in noncompliance by the treasurer with the provisions of said subparagraph (F) or (H), shall be a complete defense to any action against the treasurer for failure to disclose such information.

(3) In addition to the requirements of subdivision (2) of this subsection, each contributor who makes a contribution to a candidate or exploratory committee for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, State Comptroller, Secretary of the State, State Treasurer, state senator or state representative, any political committee authorized to make contributions to such candidates or committees, and any party committee that separately, or in the aggregate, exceeds fifty dollars shall provide with the contribution: (A) The name of the contributor's employer, if any; (B) the contributor's status as a communicator lobbyist, as defined in section 1-91, a member of the immediate family of a communicator lobbyist, a state contractor, a prospective state contractor or a principal of a state contractor or prospective state contractor, as defined in section 9-612; and (C) a certification that the contributor is not prohibited from making a contribution to such candidate or committee. The State Elections Enforcement Commission shall prepare a sample form for such certification by the contributor and shall make it available to treasurers and contributors. Such sample form shall include an explanation of the terms "communicator lobbyist", "principal of a state contractor or prospective

state contractor”, “immediate family”, “state contractor” and “prospective state contractor”. The information on such sample form shall be included in any written solicitation conducted by any such committee. If a treasurer receives such a contribution and the contributor has not provided such certification, the treasurer shall: (i) Not later than three business days after receiving the contribution, send a request for the certification to the contributor by certified mail, return receipt requested; (ii) not deposit the contribution until the treasurer obtains the certification from the contributor, notwithstanding the provisions of section 9-606; and (iii) return the contribution to the contributor if the contributor does not provide the certification not later than fourteen days after the treasurer's written request or at the end of the reporting period in which the contribution was received, whichever is later. No treasurer shall be required to obtain and keep more than one certification from each contributor, unless information certified to by the contributor, other than the amount contributed, changes. If a treasurer deposits a contribution based on a certification that is later determined to be false, the treasurer shall have a complete defense to any action, including but not limited to, any complaint investigated by the State Elections Enforcement Commission or any other investigation initiated by said commission, against such treasurer for the receipt of such contribution.

7. General Statutes § 9-704 (d) extends and modifies such requirements as they apply to participating candidate committees and provides:

(d) Each individual who makes a contribution of more than fifty dollars to a candidate committee established to aid or promote the success of a participating candidate for nomination or election shall include with the contribution a certification that contains the same information described in subdivision (3) of subsection (c) of section 9-608 and shall follow the same procedure prescribed in said subsection

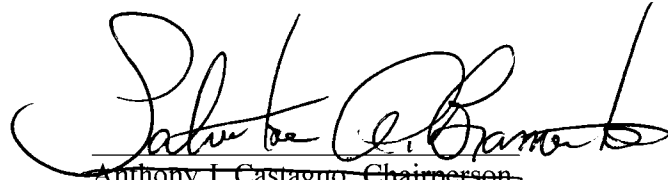
8. After investigation, including witness interviews, sworn testimony, and an extensive review of documents, Commission staff did not discover evidence sufficient to establish that Respondents John Corey Steinberg, Joseph Sledge, or Stephen Obsitnik knew or participated in any impermissible activity concerning contributions being made in the name of another.
9. Accordingly, the Commission determines that allegations against Respondents John Corey Steinberg, Joseph Sledge, and Stephen Obsitnik should be dismissed.

ORDER

The following Order is recommended on the basis of the aforementioned findings:

That the allegations in this matter that allegations against Respondents John Corey Steinberg, Joseph Sledge, and Stephen Obsitnik raised in the investigation under Commission File Number 2018-051 be dismissed.

Adopted this 7th day of OCTOBER, 2020 at Hartford, Connecticut.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Salvatore Bramante". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

~~Anthony J. Castagno, Chairperson~~

By Order of the Commission

Salvatore Bramante