

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

In re. Commission Initiated Investigation: *Josh 4 Bpt*

File No. 2019-175A

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Commission on April 25, 2019 initiated this complaint and investigation as authorized pursuant to §9-7b, General Statutes, based on possible prohibited “straw” contributions received by the *Josh 4 Bpt* candidate committee. *Josh 4 Bpt* was the candidate committee for Joshua Parrow (hereinafter “Respondent”), and he was a candidate for State Representative for the 130th General Assembly District at the May 7, 2019 special election.

After an investigation of this matter, the following findings and conclusions are made:

1. The Commission initiated this investigation into certain contributions that were received by the *Josh 4 BPT* candidate committee. During the grant validation process, it appeared that several of the contributions received by the candidate committee were paid for by an individual other than the contributor listed on the qualifying contribution card. The Commission initiated this investigation into the circumstances surrounding the contributions that were identified as being suspicious.
2. On April 5, 2019, Respondent Parrow established a candidate committee to run as a Republican Party candidate for the 130th General Assembly seat in the May 7, 2019 special election. Respondent Parrow named Sara Burns as his candidate committee treasurer. The candidate committee opted to participate in the Citizens’ Election Program. The committee applied for a grant from the Citizens’ Election Fund. The Commission, however, denied the candidate committee a grant from the Citizens’ Election Fund based on the existence of several contributions that appeared to be funded by another individual other than the individual listed on the qualifying contribution card.
3. During the grant validation process, Commission staff identified 11 contributions that were questionable based on a review of all qualifying contribution certification forms submitted by the committee to support its grant application.¹ The suspect forms, each of

¹ The qualifying contribution certification cards from the following individuals were flagged by Commission staff as questionable; they are listed with the dates they made the contribution: Andrew J. Francella (April 9, 2019); Conall C. Roberts (April 11, 2019); Anthony C. Martino (April 11, 2019); Isaiah D. Mylers (April 10, 2019); Joseph A. Grillo (April 11, 2019); Alexis E. Martinez (April 9, 2019); Jake S. Russo (April 11, 2019); Robert M. Pollock (April 10, 2019); Will L. Ciccone (April 9, 2019); Ryan P. Donnelly (April 11, 2019); and Logan J. Allen (April 10, 2019).

which were submitted to support a \$5 cash contribution to the *Josh 4 BPT*, reflected similar handwriting and signature styles.

4. The questionable contributions came from students at the University of Bridgeport, who were also baseball players on the university's team. Respondent Parrow served as the pitching coach for the baseball team.
5. The questionable contributions to the Respondent Parrow committee were solicited by Justin Hafele, a freshman pitcher on the baseball team.
6. In his conversations with Commission investigators, Mr. Hafele said that Respondent Parrow had given him \$55 in cash and had instructed him to collect 11 qualified contribution certification cards in support of the Respondent Parrow candidate committee.
7. Mr. Hafele returned to Respondent Parrow 11 contributions along with 11 qualified contribution certification cards, 10 of which Mr. Hafele said he completed and signed without the knowledge of the named contributors on the card, all of whom were players on the University of Bridgeport baseball team. One of the players, Ryan Donnelly, completed his own card, because he and Mr. Hafele were together at the time.
8. One of the cards that the Mr. Hafele had completed was for Logan Allen, who had already contributed to the Respondent Parrow.
9. Mr. Hafele gave the cards and the same \$55 in cash back to Respondent Parrow. Upon returning the cards to Respondent Parrow, Mr. Hafele said, Respondent Parrow noted that they all looked similar. Mr. Hafele said he responded, "But they had to be done, right?" To which Respondent Parrow said, "Yes, they had to be done," according to Mr. Hafele.
10. Prior to the commencement of the Commission's full investigation, Respondent Parrow chose to withdraw his application for Citizens' Election Program funds and requested a negative decision on his application from the Commission.
11. Respondent Parrow has not corroborated Hafele's statements. Respondent Parrow has moved to Troy, New York, where he coaches baseball at Hudson Valley Community College. Respondent has refused to discuss this matter with Commission investigators.
12. General Statutes § 9-622 makes it an unlawful practice to make or accept a payment in another's name. The provision states that any person shall be guilty of an unlawful practice if that person:

(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;

...

(10) Any person who solicits, makes or receives a contribution that is otherwise prohibited by any provision of this chapter;

This provision prohibits "straw contributions" or contributions given in the name of another individual.

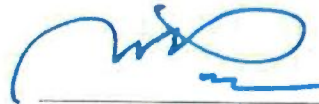
13. An individual giving in the name of another, or making a "straw contribution", is one of the most serious violations that the Commission considers. *See In re SEEC Initiated Investigation of Steve Obsitnik for Connecticut*, File No. 2018-050A, *In re Contributions to John Scott 2016*, File No. 2016-035, *In re Grant Verification of Contributions by Garrett Moore, Jr.*, File No. 2014-017; *In the Matter of Cusano Campaign Solicitors, Commission Initiated*, File No. 2008-148. This is especially true when the contributions are made to candidates trying to qualify to receive a grant of public money from the Citizens' Election Program. *Id.*
14. Based upon the available evidence collected by the Commission staff, the Commission finds, it is more likely than not, that Respondent Parrow violated General Statutes §§ 9-622 (7) and (10) by giving Mr. Hafele the funds to allow him to collect straw contributions, accepting the forged contribution cards from Hafele and then passing them on to Ms. Burns for deposit into the committee's account, and for including these funds in the Respondent's Citizens' Election Program grant application.
15. Given Respondent Parrow's absence from the jurisdiction, the Commission will take no further action on this matter at this time but reserves the right to reopen this matter if the Respondent returns.

ORDER

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

That the Commission will take no further action on this matter given the responsible party's absence from the jurisdiction of the Commission, but reserves the right to reopen this matter if the Respondent returns to the jurisdiction of the Commission.

Adopted this 18th day of January 2023 at Hartford, Connecticut by vote of the Commission.



Commissioner
By Order of the Commission