

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

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

File No. 2019-175C

**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, and he was a candidate for State Representative for the 130<sup>th</sup> General Assembly District at the May 7, 2019 special election. Respondent Sara Burns (hereinafter “Respondent”) was appointed the candidate committee’s treasurer.

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, Joshua 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. Mr. Parrow named Respondent 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.<sup>1</sup> The suspect forms, each of

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<sup>1</sup> 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. Mr. Parrow served as the pitching coach for the baseball team.
5. The questionable contributions to the Mr. 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 Mr. Parrow had given him \$55 in cash and had instructed him to collect 11 qualified contribution certification cards in support of the Mr. Parrow candidate committee.
7. Mr. Hafele returned to Mr. 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 Mr. Parrow.
9. Mr. Hafele gave the cards and the same \$55 in cash back to Mr. Parrow. Upon returning the cards to Mr. Parrow, Mr. Hafele said, Mr. Parrow noted that they all looked similar. Mr. Hafele said he responded, "But they had to be done, right?" To which Mr. Parrow said, "Yes, they had to be done," according to Mr. Hafele.
10. Prior to the commencement of the Commission's full investigation, Mr. Parrow chose to withdraw his application for Citizens' Election Program funds and requested a negative decision on his application from the Commission.
11. Mr. Parrow has not corroborated Mr. Hafele's statements. Mr. 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. The Commission finds that Respondent Burns did not violate General Statutes §§ 9-622 (7) and (10). The Respondent did not know of the scheme Mr. Parrow implemented.
15. Given Respondent Burns not knowing of or being part of the scheme, the Commission will dismiss this matter.

**ORDER**

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

That the Commission will dismiss this matter.

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



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Commissioner  
By Order of the Commission