



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

June 17, 2020

Lee Ann Blazejewski
209 Lincoln St
Howell, MI 48843-2124

Via email only

Re: *Tipton v. Blazejewski*
Campaign Finance Complaint
No. 2020-06-24-47

Dear Ms. Blazejewski:

The Department of State (Department) has received a formal complaint alleging you have violated MCL 169.247 of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA) by failing to include a complete and correct identification statement on certain campaign-related materials. A copy of the complaint is enclosed.

The complaint was submitted to the Department on June 12, 2020 by Michael Tipton and alleges that you have distributed yard signs that did not include a proper paid for by statement. A picture of the yard signs is included with the complaint.

The MCFA and corresponding administrative rules require a person who produces printed material that relates to an election include the phrase "Paid for by [name and address of the person who paid for the item]." MCL 169.247(1), R 169.36(2). A knowing violation constitutes a misdemeanor offense punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000.00, imprisonment for up to 93 days, or both. MCL 169.247(6).

Upon review, the evidence submitted supports the conclusion that a potential violation of the Act has occurred. From the outset, the Department must consider whether it is an expenditure covered by the MCFA. The yard sign specifically states "Elect Lee Ann Blazejewski County Commissioner" which uses words of express advocacy as defined by the Act. MCL 169.206(2)(j). Because it urges voters to vote for you using words of express advocacy and was published by your committee, the signs are covered by the gambit of the Act and must include the paid for by statement outlined under section 47. MCL 169.206(2)(j). However, the signs have completely omitted the required paid for by statement. Since this phrase is absent, the evidence supports the conclusion that a potential violation has occurred.

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After reaching this conclusion, the Act requires the Department to “endeavor to correct the violation or prevent a further violation by using informal methods [.]” if it finds that “there may be reason to believe that a violation ... has occurred [.]” MCL 169.215(10). The objective of an informal resolution is “to correct the violation or prevent a further violation [.]” *Id.*

Given this, the Department concludes that a formal warning is a sufficient resolution to the complaint and is hereby advising you that MCL 169.247(1) and R 169.36(2) require you to print a complete and accurate identification statement on all campaign materials, consisting of the phrase “paid for by” followed by the full name and address of your committee.

Note that all printed materials referencing you or your candidacy produced in the future must include this identification statement. For all materials currently in circulation, the paid for by statement must be corrected. If this information has been included in your materials and you wish to rebut the Department’s conclusion, you must respond in writing to the Department within 15 business days of the date of this letter otherwise the Department will treat the complaint as resolved.

Please be advised that this notice has served to remind you of your obligation under the Act to identify your printed matter and may be used in future proceedings as evidence that tends to establish a knowing violation of the Act. A knowing violation is a misdemeanor offense and may merit referral to the Attorney General for enforcement action. MCL 169.247(6), 215(10).

Sincerely,



Adam Fracassi
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

Enclosure

c: Michael Tipton, via email