

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

**JUDICIAL PANEL**  
**UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT**  
**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

**DAIZHON COX**

Appellate

v.

**THE JUDICIAL PANEL**

Respondent

**FEBRUARY 28, 2025**

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This was an appeal hearing in which DAIZHON COX appealed the Judicial Panel’s decision to strike invalid signatures from his candidate petition for a violation of the Digital Petitioning Guidelines, which resulted in disqualification.

### **Digital Petitioning Guidelines**

Section 4:

*“Digital petition forms for candidates must display the following information, which must be visible to all signatories who submit the form:*

- a. Candidate Name(s)*
- b. Position the Candidate(s) is/are seeking*
- c. Circulator Name(s)*
- d. Slate (If Applicable)”*

*Held:* The Judicial Panel finds there to be no procedural error and upholds the original decision.

### **Opinion**

This appeal concerns the Judicial Panel’s ruling that Mr. Daizhon Cox’s petition signatures were invalid, leading to his disqualification. The original ruling found that 61 signatures were improperly collected because they either had no circulators listed or listed circulators that were not clearly outlined on the petition form. Mr. Cox challenges the ruling on multiple grounds, arguing that the Panel exceeded its authority, misinterpreted petitioning guidelines, contradicted precedent, and applied disqualification without clear authorization. After reviewing the arguments, the Judicial Panel Appeal Panel affirms the original ruling, upholding Mr. Cox’s disqualification.

Mr. Cox argues that the Judicial Panel’s requirement that circulator names must appear in a specific subsection labeled “Circulator” lacks textual foundation. However, the Digital Petitioning Guidelines explicitly require that each petition must contain the Candidate Name(s), Position the Candidate(s) is/are seeking, Circulator Name(s), and Slate (if applicable). The guidelines clearly distinguish between candidate names and circulator names, meaning that listing a candidate’s name alone does not inherently satisfy the circulator requirement. Mr. Cox’s defense—that if a student was approached by a candidate, they would assume that the candidate was the circulator—is an assumption that does not replace the explicit requirement that circulator names be listed separately.

Furthermore, Mr. Cox asserts that the USG website’s guide on how to make a secure petition does not specify where circulator names must go. However, this same guide also does not specify where to list candidate names or the position sought, yet those sections were included in the

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petition. If Mr. Cox’s campaign had been following the Digital Petitioning Guidelines as written, they would have included a section for circulator names just as they did for candidate names and positions. While the Digital Petitioning Guidelines do not specify exactly where circulator names must be placed, they make it clear that circulator names must be present. Their absence makes the petition non-compliant with election requirements.

Mr. Cox further asserts that the Election Bylaws give the Judicial Panel the authority to “verify and validate” petition signatures but do not specify limitations on rejecting signatures after validation. He claims that because his petition was originally accepted, the Judicial Panel exceeded its authority by later invalidating signatures. However, if signatures were collected in violation of election guidelines, they were never valid to begin with. The Judicial Panel did not overreach; it corrected an error in initial validation. Meeting the 500-signature threshold requires that all signatures be properly collected, and if Mr. Cox’s petition did not meet these standards, then he never actually reached the required number of valid signatures, justifying disqualification.

The Judicial Panel acknowledges that an error in the initial validation was inevitable, as the Panel does not receive a history of petition edits, only the final petition at the time of submission. This means that if circulator information was missing at any point before submission, the Panel would have no way of detecting the issue unless it was reported. The Panel’s ruling was not an arbitrary reconsideration of an already approved petition but a necessary correction based on new information that exposed a failure to comply with election requirements.

Mr. Cox also argues that the ruling contradicts precedent established in *Almuti v. Cox*, where the Judicial Panel previously ruled that circulator verification issues were inconclusive and did not warrant invalidation of signatures. However, the Panel’s opinion in *Almuti v. Cox* was inconclusive because the case contained incomplete citations of bylaws, not because Mr. Cox was deemed not guilty. Therefore, this precedent does not contradict the ruling in the current case.

Finally, Mr. Cox claims that the Digital Petitioning Guidelines do not specify disqualifiable offenses and therefore his disqualification was not justified under election rules. While it is true that the guidelines do not explicitly list disqualifications, they state that each President/Vice President candidate team must collect 500 signatures. If a candidate fails to submit a petition that meets these requirements, then their petition is invalid, which subsequently disqualifies them from the election. The Judicial Panel did not disqualify Mr. Cox arbitrarily—his petition failed to meet clear election requirements, meaning that he never officially qualified as a candidate.

After reviewing the appeal, the Judicial Panel Appeal Panel finds no procedural errors or misapplications of election law. Mr. Cox’s petition did not meet the Digital Petitioning Guidelines’ requirements, and as a result, he did not qualify for the election. The Judicial Panel

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did not exceed its authority, misinterpret precedent, or selectively enforce election rules. Additionally, the Panel's ruling was not an arbitrary reversal of validation but a correction of an inevitable error due to the lack of access to petition edit history. Therefore, the original ruling is upheld, and Mr. Cox's disqualification remains in place.

**It is so ordered.**

Signed: The Judicial Panel

Majority:

Chief Justice Matthew Okocha

Justice Laila Coats

Justice Abby Yallop

Justice RiverJordan Carr

Advisor Anna Sullivan-Kvam