

As Written By Justice Lizzy Roka

THE JUDICIAL PANEL
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

JACOB CHANG & ANNA VALERIUS

Plaintiff

v.

MADDIE CARSON & SRI UPPALAPATI

Defendant

11 March 2021

On Monday, March 1, the Jacob & Anna Campaign (Plaintiff) submitted a brief to the Judicial Panel, alleging that the Maddie & Sri Campaign (Defense) committed a type III violation per Article II.A.2.iii of the 2020-21 USG Election Bylaws. The bylaw prohibits campaigning in a residence hall or its virtual space.

Opinion

Plaintiff presented evidence that the Defense sent a campaign advertisement to a Politics, Society, and Law (PSL) Scholars GroupMe chat. They argued that because PSL Scholars are affiliated with Floor 3 of the Smith-Steeb Residence Hall and overall Residence Life, this action constitutes a violation of the aforementioned bylaw. The Judicial Panel, however, respectfully disagrees with this argument.

First, the group chat presented by Plaintiff did not appear limited to a floor of a residence hall. The group chat is entitled “Politics, Society, and Law Scholars,” signifying that the chat is not limited to a particular living space, but rather an academic group. It was mentioned by the Defense, as is common university knowledge, that not all PSL Scholars live on the third floor of Smith-Steeb. The Defense additionally presented evidence that there, in fact, exists a separate chat called “Smith 3” that is designed for Residence Life activities and announcements. This chat is led by a Residential Advisor (RA) and contains less people than the chat Plaintiff presented—which is consistent with the fact the PSL program contains more people than what is allotted on a single residence hall floor. Based on this and further evidence from the Defense, the Panel understands the GroupMe presented by Plaintiff to be an informal, student-led group chat intended for PSL Scholars, regardless of the residence hall in which they reside.

Second, even if the group chat were limited to PSL Scholars living on Floor 3 of Smith-Steeb, it remains difficult to categorize the PSL program as an inherent part of Residence Life. PSL is an academic Scholars program overseen by the larger Honors & Scholars Program. Although Scholars programs do try to routinely group students in the same residence hall floor and may involve RA’s in their activities—as mentioned by the Plaintiff—it is important to distinguish Scholars programs from learning communities. Learning communities are supervised under University Housing and require participants to live in the same residence hall, whereas Scholars programs do not. It is the Judicial Panel’s opinion that a Scholars program group chat is more akin to an organizational email list, subject to Article II.a.1.v.3, than to a residence hall’s virtual space. Based on evidence that permission to advertise the campaign from the group chat’s administrator was obtained prior to the message being sent, we have determined the Defense’s actions to be consistent with that bylaw, as well.

Thus, it is with confidence that the Judicial Panel finds the Maddie and Sri Campaign to be not in violation of the Election Bylaws and denies Plaintiff’s request for a \$100 penalty.

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It is so ordered.

Signed: The Judicial Panel

Majority:

Chief Justice Josh Badzik, Presiding
Justice Lizzy Roka
Justice Chelsea Johnson
Justice Amit Khanna
Justice Nicholas Sillart