

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

JUDICIAL PANEL
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OLIVER GRIFFITH

Plaintiff

v.

AMJAD ALMUTI

Defendant

February 24, 2025

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

In the matter of Griffith v. Almuti, the plaintiff alleges that the defendants committed 51 violations of Article II.A.a.vi. and 43 violations of Article II.A.b.iv. of the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws.

Election Bylaws

Article II.A.a.vi.

“All websites maintained by a candidate, candidate team, or slate are subject to review by the Judicial Panel and must adhere to the rules and regulations in these bylaws. Such websites must have a visible link to the Judicial Panel Elections webpage on each page of their website. This is a type I bylaw.”

Article II.A.b.iv.

“Candidates, teams and slates may not overtly act to gain votes, or solicit for votes before the approved campaigning season begins. This is a type III bylaw.

1. Candidates, candidate teams, and slates may produce campaign materials and create a website at any time but may not be visible at any time before campaigning begins.”

Held: The Judicial Panel that the Defendant is in violation of Article II.A.a.vi and Article II.A.b.iv.

Opinion

In the case of Griffith v. Almuti, the plaintiff alleged that the defendants committed 51 violations by failing to include the Judicial Panel Election page hyperlink on their website, in addition to violations for three affiliated Instagram accounts and a Linktree. The plaintiff further claimed that the defendants engaged in early campaigning by publishing their website prematurely, instructing visitors to vote for the headlining candidates, creating Instagram accounts, and maintaining a Linktree. Additionally, they alleged that 43 individual senate candidate webpages constituted early campaigning. In total, the plaintiff argued that these 94 violations warranted \$4,810 in fines.

To assess the failure to include the required hyperlink, the Judicial Panel had to define what legally constitutes a website. Using a framework that breaks down domain > website > web page, we determined that the "website" referred to the overarching publicly accessible domain. Because this domain did not include a link to the Judicial Panel Election page, the Panel found a single violation rather than 47. However, the three Instagram accounts and Linktree were separate campaign resources that also failed to include the required hyperlink, bringing the total violations of Article II.A.a.vi to five. As a result, the Almuti campaign is fined \$50, with this amount to be deducted from their campaign budget.

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Regarding early campaigning, the Judicial Panel found two clear violations. On January 12, 2025, the campaign website displayed a ticker reading "Vote Amjad Almuti for President", and on January 13, 2025, the same ticker read "Vote Naba Jasim for Vice President." Since this language directly solicited votes before the official campaign period, the Panel imposes a \$200 fine (\$100 for each instance). The Judicial Panel also found the Linktree associated with the Almuti campaign to be an instance of early campaigning, along with the three Instagram accounts affiliated with the campaign. For these violations, the Panel imposes an additional \$200 fine (\$50 for each offense).

The plaintiff further alleged 36 instances of endorsed senators engaging in early campaigning via their webpages. However, the Judicial Panel finds the defendants not guilty on these charges, as the 36 pages were edited, or could have been edited, by individuals outside of the campaign. The plaintiff acknowledged this reality during the hearing, leading the Panel to dismiss this claim.

In total, the Almuti campaign was fined \$450, to be deducted from their campaign budget.

During the hearing, the defense challenged the legitimacy of these claims on the grounds that they were reported more than 72 hours after being noticed, which is a violation of the Election Bylaws. The plaintiff countered this argument by citing *Rossing-Noma v. Griffith (2025)* as precedent, where the Judicial Panel heard a case filed in January based on facts originally presented in November. The Panel ruled in that instance that, because the Judicial Panel was non-functional at the time of the alleged violation, it was reasonable to allow the case to proceed. While the Panel has elected to hear this case under similar reasoning, we acknowledge the defense's concerns about potential abuse of this precedent in the future. Moving forward, the Panel urges caution in using this argument as a means to circumvent the 72-hour rule and will carefully consider its application in future cases.

It is so ordered.

Signed: The Judicial Panel

Majority:

Chief Justice Matthew Okocha

Justice Ryan Buchko

Justice Judith Vega

Justice Sean O'Brien

Justice RiverJordan Carr