

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

JUDICIAL PANEL
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OLIVER GRIFFITH

Plaintiff

v.

DAZHON COX

Defendant

FEBRUARY 25, 2025

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

In the matter of *Griffith v. Cox*, the plaintiff alleges that the defendants violated Article I.B.b.ii., Article I.B.b.iii., and Article II.A.a.vii. of the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws.

Election Bylaws

Article I.B.b.ii.

“Verified signatures contained within the petition must come from registered and active Ohio State University undergraduate students.

- 1. The Judicial Panel shall verify and validate all petitions submitted.*
- 2. Any unqualified signatures shall be rejected as invalid, but shall not invalidate other valid signatures on the same petition.*
- 3. No petitioner shall allow any undergraduate student to sign any name other than their own to all petitions.”*

Article I.B.b.iii.

“Every page of the petition shall bear the name of the circulator, verifying that they identified the purpose of said petition and witnessed that all signatures placed upon it were made by eligible students to the best of their knowledge, for that page to be valid.

- 1. In the case of circulating petitions on social media, petitions may only be circulated by approved and listed circulators on their personal social media accounts with their name clearly attached to the account, for the purposes of clearly verifying who the circulators are.*
- 2. Initiatives and referenda do not have to provide a candidate name or signature, but must still provide the printed name and signature of the circulator.*
- 3. Circulators must be registered undergraduate students at The Ohio State University.”*

Article II.A.a.vii.

“All e-mail advertising a specific candidate must include a disclaimer at the bottom of the email that reads, “Please reply to sender requesting removal from email list if you do not wish to receive further e-mail from this candidate. If you still receive email from this candidate please contact the Judicial Panel at usselections@osu.edu.” Any such request must be honored within twenty-four (24) hours. This is a type I bylaw.

- 1. Each uniquely worded email or mail merge sent without the disclaimer, regardless of the number of recipients, counts as an individual violation of the type I bylaw.*

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2. *Class email lists may not be utilized by any campaign, candidate team, or slate. This is a type II bylaw.*
3. *Organization email lists may only be utilized with permission of instructor or administrator. This is a type II bylaw.”*

Held: The Judicial Panel finds the Defendant in violation of Article I.B.b.iii. and Article II.A.a.vii. of the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws.

Opinion

In the matter of *Griffith v. Cox*, the plaintiff alleged that the defendant, Daizhon Cox, violated multiple sections of the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws, including issues related to circulator validation and misuse of university resources for campaign purposes. After reviewing the evidence presented, the Judicial Panel finds that the defendant’s petition signatures fall below the required threshold for candidacy validation, and further, that he violated campaign regulations regarding the use of class emails for election-related purposes.

Regarding Article I.B.b.iii, the Judicial Panel reviewed Mr. Cox’s campaign petition form and found that before January 21, 2025, at 4:33 PM, no circulator was listed on the form. As a result, 46 signatures collected prior to that date were deemed invalid. Furthermore, an additional 15 signatures were invalidated because Michael Ward was not listed as a circulator on the petition form until January 30, 2025, meaning that all signatures listing him as a circulator before this date must also be struck. In total, 61 signatures were invalidated from Mr. Cox’s petition. Mr. Cox’s campaign initially collected 555 total signatures. After the removal of the 61 invalid signatures, his total number of valid signatures is 494. Because the threshold for candidacy validation is 500 signatures, Mr. Cox does not meet the minimum requirement to appear on the ballot, effectively disqualifying him from candidacy.

Additionally, the Judicial Panel reviewed allegations under Article II.A.a.vii., which prohibits the use of university resources, such as class email lists, for campaign purposes. The evidence clearly shows that Mr. Cox sent the link to his campaign petition through a class email or Carmen list, violating this provision. Article II.A.b.ix. of the Election Bylaws states, “*Ignorance of the rules is not a defense to breaking them.*” When asked about his familiarity with the Election Bylaws, Mr. Cox admitted that he had only briefly reviewed them and did not have full knowledge of them until the Judicial Panel directly provided them to him, despite the fact that the bylaws had been publicly posted on the USG Elections website. The Judicial Panel finds that a reasonable person running for Student Government President would have made themselves fully aware of the rules governing their campaign.

Because Article II.A.a.vii. is classified as a Type II bylaw, the violation carries a financial penalty. As a result, the Judicial Panel imposes a \$50 fine, which will be deducted from Mr. Cox’s campaign spending limit.

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Based on the findings regarding petition validity, Mr. Cox has failed to meet the minimum required signatures and is therefore disqualified from candidacy. Furthermore, the Judicial Panel finds Mr. Cox guilty of a Type II campaign violation under Article II.A.a.vii. by using a class email or Carmen list for campaign purposes and issues a \$15 fine, to be deducted from his campaign spending limit. While ignorance of the rules is not a defense, the Panel also notes the importance of candidate responsibility in adhering to the election bylaws.

Final Ruling: Daizhon Cox is disqualified from candidacy for failing to meet the required signature threshold. Additionally, he is fined \$50 for violating Article II.A.a.vii.

It is so ordered.

Signed: The Judicial Panel

Majority:

Chief Justice Matthew Okocha

Justice Ryan Buchko

Justice Sean O'Brien

Justice Abby Yallop

Justice Judith Vega