

As written by Justice [Name]

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

**AMJAD ALMUTI**

Plaintiff

v.

**OLIVER GRIFFITH and VAIDEHI MORE**

Defendants

**MARCH 27, 2025**

In the matter of ALMUTI v. GRIFFITH & MORE, the plaintiff alleges that the defendants violated Article II.A.b.vi and Article II.A.b.v of the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws.

### **Election Bylaws**

Article II.A.b.vi.

*“All campaigning must follow any guidelines set by the Office of Student Life for student organizations, as well as all University health and safety regulations. This is a Type IV bylaw. This applies to both on-campus and off-campus campaigning.”*

Article II.A.b.v.

*“All campaigning must follow guidelines set by Facilities Operations and Development Posting and Chalking Guidelines, Residence Life Student Code of Conduct, and the Ohio Union. This is a type III bylaw.”*

*Held:* The Judicial Panel finds the Griffith-More campaign guilty of thirty-five violations of Article II.A.b.v. The slate is disqualified from the 2025 Undergraduate Student Government Elections.

### **Opinion**

In the matter of *Almuti v. Griffith & More*, the plaintiff, Mr. Amjad Almuti, alleges that the Griffith-More campaign committed thirty-seven violations of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) Election Bylaws—specifically, Article II.A.b.vi and Article II.A.b.v. Article II.A.b.vi requires all campaigning to comply with guidelines set by the Office of Student Life and university health and safety regulations, a Type IV bylaw. Article II.A.b.v requires compliance with guidelines set by Facilities Operations and Development Posting and Chalking Guidelines, the Residence Life Student Code of Conduct, and the Ohio Union—governing campaigning-related signage and materials. This is a Type III bylaw.

The plaintiff’s allegations stem from photo and video evidence showing campaign palm cards, purchased by the Griffith-More campaign, placed under windshields of vehicles in the Buckeye Lot at 2701 Fred Taylor Drive. This lot is a high-traffic commuter parking area. Mr. Almuti asserts that this act constitutes a violation of Ohio Revised Code Section 3767.32 (on littering), which would in turn violate Article II.A.b.vi through the university’s own code of conduct. While this argument is well-intentioned, the Judicial Panel cannot rule on violations of state law, as we do not possess original jurisdiction over such matters. In order for the Judicial Panel to find a violation of Article II.A.b.vi in this context, an external body—such as the Ohio State University Board of Student Conduct—would first need to determine that a state law was violated. As that step has not occurred, the Panel cannot issue a ruling on Article II.A.b.vi.

However, Article II.A.b.v falls directly within our jurisdiction, as it pertains to university-specific guidelines. According to the Facilities Operations and Development Posting and Chalking Guidelines, temporary signage may only be posted on designated open posting boards and kiosks. The placement of palm cards under vehicle windshields clearly violates these policies.

During the hearing, Mr. Oliver Griffith admitted that he purchased 2,500 palm cards and distributed approximately 2,400 to senatorial candidates and other members of the campaign working to garner support. In his own words, Mr. Griffith stated that the campaign even handed out large stacks of palm cards to individuals on High Street who expressed support, encouraging them to share the material widely. According to the USG Election Bylaws, a “campaign member” is defined as any individual actively involved in persuading people to vote a certain way. By handing out stacks of campaign materials to individuals for dissemination, those individuals became campaign members under the bylaw, and their actions became an extension of the Griffith-More campaign.

The bylaw at issue does not require the Judicial Panel to identify which individual placed the material in the prohibited location—it simply states that *all campaigning* must follow the prescribed university rules. Campaigning, as defined in the bylaws, includes any action intended to persuade someone to vote a certain way. The palm cards meet this definition, and placing them under windshields was a clear act of campaigning in violation of university guidelines.

The defendants cited *Farinacci v. Messenger* (2011) to argue that the Judicial Panel lacks the authority to adjudicate cases involving such violations. However, that precedent only applies to matters governed by the Code of Student Conduct and federal law, not the Posting and Chalking Guidelines, and certainly not election-specific bylaw enforcement. There is no alternative venue that handles violations of the Posting and Chalking Guidelines in the context of USG campaigning, and the Judicial Panel remains the appropriate authority to hear this matter.

While surveillance footage submitted by the plaintiff was not able to conclusively identify who placed the palm cards under the windshields, the core issue is not who did it, but whether the campaign’s materials—produced and widely distributed by the campaign—were used in a manner that violated the guidelines. The answer is clearly yes.

Some may argue that a candidate cannot be held responsible for what others do with the materials they hand out, but this would create a dangerous precedent. Without accountability for how campaign materials are used, a candidate could intentionally flood the campus with palm cards and claim innocence if they ended up being misused. The Judicial Panel must reaffirm that candidates are responsible for the actions of their campaign and the materials they distribute. Article II.B.a.iii.1 explicitly states, “Each candidate team, candidate, or slate is responsible for their actions.” Mr. Griffith, by distributing 2,400 palm cards, assumed responsibility for their

use. Whether he personally placed them under the windshields is irrelevant—the materials were used in an impermissible way, and he is accountable for that outcome.

Had this case involved a handful of misplaced cards or a single incident, we may have reached a different conclusion. But the sheer volume of campaign materials distributed—2,400 palm cards—demands accountability. If campaigns are permitted to disassociate themselves from their own materials after handing them out in bulk, we open the door to unchecked and untraceable violations of campaign procedure.

Therefore, the Judicial Panel finds the Griffith-More slate guilty of thirty-five violations of Article II.A.b.v, assessing a \$50 fine for each violation. This totals \$1,750 in penalties. As of March 24, 2025, the Griffith-More campaign had spent \$1,453.75 and had already been fined \$150 in a prior case. With this additional penalty, their campaign budget drops to -\$1,353.15. Article II.C.b.v states, “Any fines incurred that bring the value of a candidate or slate below zero (0) dollars shall result in disqualification.” Accordingly, the Judicial Panel finds that the Griffith-More slate is disqualified from the 2025 USG Elections.

The Judicial Panel takes no joy in rulings of this nature. We strongly encourage all candidates and campaign teams to exercise diligence when distributing materials and to ensure compliance with the rules laid out in the Election Bylaws. Additionally, the Judicial Panel offers a word of caution to all campaigns regarding the temptation to weaponize violations for political gain. While there is no evidence to suggest this occurred in this case, we emphasize that should it ever be proven that a candidate or campaign acted maliciously to entrap an opponent, the consequences would be severe. Campaign integrity requires not only compliance with the rules, but also honesty, respect, and fairness throughout the election process.

### **Dissenting Opinion** (as Written By Justice Sean O’Brien)

I respectfully dissent from the majority opinion in this case. While I agree with my fellow justices that a violation of the bylaws occurred beyond a reasonable doubt, my dissent concerns the issue of liability, specifically, who is responsible for the violation. The bylaws in question are:

Article II.A.b.vi.

*“All campaigning must follow guidelines set by Facilities Operations and Development Posting and Chalking Guidelines, Residence Life Student Code of Conduct, and the Ohio Union. This is a type III bylaw.”*

Article II.B.a.iii.1

*“Each candidate team, candidate, or slate is responsible for their actions.”*

Article II.B.a.iii.4

*“A slate is completely responsible for any and all of their respective campaign members liable for any and all bylaws violations of which that slate, member candidates of that slate, or any other slate campaign members are found guilty.”*

While the majority finds the Griffith-More campaign liable for placing palm cards under windshields in the Buckeye Lot, I stick to my decision in the original Almuti v. Griffith ruling; I find that the evidence presented does not sufficiently establish the responsible party. The new evidence, which includes camera footage, does not clearly identify any individual or group as the one placing the palm cards. The car cited as Patrick Jotevski is of too low quality for a reasonable person to deduce its make, model, and therefore ownership. Without conclusive proof that a campaign member or someone acting on behalf of the campaign committed the act, this goes against Article II.B.a.iii.4.

Furthermore, rather than selectively focusing on specific sections of the bylaws, we should interpret the bylaws as a whole. The spirit of these regulations is to ensure fairness and accountability in the election process, but fairness also requires that liability not be imposed without definitive proof. A holistic approach is needed and would require certainty in both the occurrence of a violation and the identity of the responsible party before assigning penalties.

The majority opinion assumes that because the materials originated from the Griffith-More campaign, the campaign should be held responsible. While the instances where the Griffith campaign gave a large stack of palm cards for people to give to their friends was irresponsible of them, it would not constitute guilt in this situation relating to the Buckeye Lot. If another party, whether an unaffiliated student, an outside actor, or even a supporter acting independently, was responsible for the violation, holding the campaign accountable would be unjust. This sets a dangerous precedent for the future, for the originator of a material would be liable for whatever happens to it, no matter who gets their hands on it.

Therefore, I agree that placing palm cards on vehicles violates Article II.A.b.vi., and that the distribution of such a high volume of palm cards is irresponsible. I dissent from the majority's conclusion that the Griffith-More campaign is liable for this violation. Because the evidence fails to establish who committed the act conclusively, I find that the necessary threshold of proof has not been met. Accordingly, I would find the Griffith-More campaign not liable for this alleged violation.

**It is so ordered.**

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

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Signed: The Judicial Panel

Majority:

Chief Justice Matthew Okocha

Justice Ethan Moore

Justice Ryan Buchko

Justice RiverJordan Carr

Dissenting:

Justice Sean O'Brien