

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

JUDICIAL PANEL

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

CHAY ROBERT ROSSING & KATHRINA NOMA

Plaintiffs

v.

OLIVER GRIFFITH

Defendant

February 23, 2025

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

In the matter of CHAY ROBERT ROSSING & KATHRINA NOMA, the plaintiffs allege that the defendants committed four (4) violations of Article II.A.a.v, and one (1) violation of Article IV.A.a.iv of the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws.

Election Bylaws

Article II.A.a.v

“Any candidate seeking election to any position is required to abstain from engaging in any type of bullying or harassment of other candidates. This includes, but is not limited to, actions such as mockery, belittlement, intimidation, or any other behavior intended to harm, demean, or undermine the candidacy of others. This is a type IV bylaw.”

Article IV.A.a.iv

“Violating any type IV bylaw has a maximum penalty of disqualification or one hundred fifty (150) dollars per instance of violation.”

Held: The Judicial Panel finds that the Defendant is in violation of Article II.A.a.v.

Opinion

In the matter of Rossing & Noma v. Griffith, the plaintiffs alleged that the defendant, Oliver Griffith, engaged in multiple violations of the Undergraduate Student Government Election Bylaws, including intimidation of candidates, targeted budget adjustments, and early campaigning. Upon reviewing the evidence, the Judicial Panel finds that Mr. Griffith is guilty of one violation of Article II.A.a.v but does not find sufficient evidence to hold him accountable for the remaining claims.

The Judicial Panel finds that Mr. Griffith engaged in an attempt to pressure Chay Robert Rossing and Kathrina Noma into withdrawing from the race. In a message to Mr. Rossing, Mr. Griffith stated: *“Thank you for reaching out. Could you send me your number? I want to make sure that we are in touch. I don’t see any reason for the campaign not to be a polite one. I value a unified student government the most and wouldn’t want anyone else in your roles either, so if you guys decide not to run then I would want those roles to be available for you. However, that offer will not be in place if you choose to run.”* The Judicial Panel holds that this message was an attempt to influence the plaintiffs' decision to run by implying that their future opportunities in Undergraduate Student Government were contingent upon their withdrawal from the election. As such, the Panel considers this an attempt to intimidate them into dropping out, which constitutes a violation of Article II.A.a.v. For this violation, the Judicial Panel imposes a \$150 penalty, which will be deducted from Mr. Griffith’s campaign budget.

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The plaintiffs also alleged two additional instances of intimidation. First, they claimed that Mr. Griffith again attempted to pressure them into dropping out by stating, *"I'd be more than happy to work with you in the future, but the dynamic of the roles change if you decide to run."* While the Panel acknowledges that this statement may have had an impact on the plaintiffs, we cannot determine beyond a reasonable doubt that it was intended to intimidate or discourage their candidacy. Therefore, the Panel does not find Mr. Griffith guilty of this allegation. In the third claim, the plaintiffs asserted that Ms. Noma felt targeted by the actions of Mr. Griffith and another member of his team. The Panel takes such concerns seriously but finds that the plaintiffs did not present sufficient and convincing evidence to substantiate a claim of intimidation under the Election Bylaws. As a result, we do not find Mr. Griffith guilty of this violation.

Additionally, the plaintiffs alleged that Mr. Griffith intentionally targeted budget items requested by Chay Robert Rossing by moving to withdraw or bring into question a total of \$5,500 in funding during the 18th Session of the 57th General Assembly on January 15, 2025. After reviewing the evidence, the Judicial Panel finds that it cannot determine beyond a reasonable doubt that these motions were specifically aimed at Mr. Rossing's funding requests rather than being part of broader financial considerations. Consequently, the Panel does not find Mr. Griffith guilty of this allegation.

Lastly, the plaintiffs claimed that Mr. Griffith engaged in early campaigning by acknowledging his candidacy before the official campaign season began. However, in their brief, the plaintiffs cited Article IV.A.a.iv, which states, *"Violating any type IV bylaw has a maximum penalty of disqualification or one hundred fifty (150) dollars per instance of violation."* Upon reviewing the case, the Judicial Panel finds that this bylaw does not pertain to early campaigning. Because the plaintiffs cited the wrong bylaw, the Panel is unable to make a ruling on this claim. Therefore, Mr. Griffith is not found guilty of this violation.

For the reasons stated above, the Judicial Panel finds Oliver Griffith guilty of one violation of Article II.A.a.v and imposes a \$150 penalty to be deducted from his campaign budget. The Judicial Panel does not find him guilty of the remaining allegations due to insufficient evidence or incorrect bylaw citation.

It is so ordered.

As written by Justice Matthew Okocha

Signed: The Judicial Panel

Majority:

Chief Justice Matthew Okocha

Justice Judith Vega

Justice Abby Yallof

Justice Sean O'Brien