



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

In the Matter of)
)
Jill Stein for President and Steven Welzer) MUR 7205
in his official capacity as treasurer)

**STATEMENT OF REASONS
OF VICE CHAIR ELLEN L. WEINTRAUB**

Federal campaign finance law contains a sweeping ban on foreign money in American elections.¹ Foreign nationals may not donate to campaigns, and no person may “solicit, accept, or receive a contribution or donation” from a foreign national.

This matter involved allegations that Jill Stein for President (“Stein Committee”) violated the law by accepting foreign national donations in connection with the campaign’s 2016 recount effort. The Complainant included screenshots of tweets from 45 Twitter users who apparently donated to the recount effort and had foreign locations listed in the “location” field of their profiles, concluding that the Stein Committee may have accepted foreign donations.²

The Stein Committee did not respond to the Complaint. Although it is unclear if each of the Twitter users identified in the Complaint were indeed foreign nationals, at least one of the profiles of a purported donor expressly stated the user is not a United States citizen.³

The American people are confronted every day with the importance — and urgency — of keeping foreign money out of our elections. The law has a zero-tolerance policy on foreign donations, and I believe that should be our guide.⁴ It is particularly concerning that a review of the archived version of the campaign’s website showed that its donation page failed to mention the law’s prohibition on foreign national donations, suggesting a possible systemic failure to

¹ 52 U.S.C. § 30121(a).

² See First Gen. Counsel’s Report in MUR 7205 (Jill Stein for President, *et al.*) (“FGCR”) at 2.

³ *Id.* at 4.

⁴ See, e.g., Certification in MURs 7094, 7096, & 7098 (Donald J. Trump for President, Inc., *et al.*), dated July 31, 2018; Certification in MUR 6976 (Johnny W. Streets, Jr., *et al.*), dated November 17, 2016.

keep foreign money out.⁵ Thus, I disagreed with the Office of the General Counsel’s conclusion that the Stein Committee likely accepted only a *de minimis* amount of foreign donations.⁶ We simply do not know the value of foreign donations the campaign may have accepted.

We do know that at least one foreign national appears to have donated to the campaign, that the campaign did not warn donors that foreign nationals may not contribute, and that the Stein Committee ignored the Complaint. The Stein Committee chose not to provide the Commission with as much as a cursory denial of the allegations or any explanation of the Committee’s compliance measures and efforts to screen out money from foreign sources. I therefore voted to find reason to believe the Stein Committee may have violated the law and moved to direct the Commission’s attorneys to investigate the allegations.⁷ “Reason to believe” is a threshold determination that does not itself establish that the law has been violated. On the contrary, the Commission has stated that it will find reason to believe “in cases where the available evidence in the matter is at least sufficient to warrant conducting an investigation, and where the seriousness of the alleged violation warrants either further investigation or immediate conciliation.”⁸

It’s not always true that where there’s smoke, there’s fire. But where there’s smoke, it’s a pretty good idea to at least check to see if anything’s on fire. In this matter, my Republican colleagues silenced the smoke detector and went back to sleep.

September 7, 2018

Date



Ellen L. Weintraub
Vice Chair

⁵ FGCR at 3.

⁶ *Id.* at 7.

⁷ See Certification in MUR 7205 (Jill Stein for President, *et al.*), dated July 31, 2018.

⁸ See 72 F.R. 12545, [Statement of Policy Regarding Commission Action in Matters at the Initial Stage in the Enforcement Process](#) (Mar. 16, 2007).