

OFFICE OF
GENERAL COUNSEL

2018 SEP 17 AM 9:40

BEFORE THE UNITED STATES
FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

Leslie Dougher

Green Cove Springs, FL 32043

V.

MUR No. 7501Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate
972 W Whitmire Dr
Melbourne, FL 32935Democratic Executive Committee of Florida
214 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

COMPLAINT

This constitutes a Verified Complaint by Leslie Dougher (“Complainant”) filed pursuant to 52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(1) against Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate, the principal campaign committee for Senator Bill Nelson, a candidate for United States Senate in Florida (herein referenced as “Nelson”) and the Democratic Executive Committee of Florida (“Florida Democratic Party”).

Based upon information and belief, Complainant files this Complaint to the Federal Election Commission (“FEC” or “Commission”) against Nelson and the Florida Democratic Party for engaging in a coordinated scheme to evade the federal contribution limits in an attempt to bolster Nelson’s reelection efforts. Specifically, Nelson has accepted over \$58,000 in in-kind contributions from the Florida Democratic Party, far exceeding the \$5,000 contribution limit and without reporting the contributions.

Public filings make clear that Nelson has illegally accepted excessive contributions from the Florida Democratic Party and failed to report these contributions, in violation of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended (“FECA” or “Act”), and Commission regulations.

Analysis

Starting on June 15th, 2018, the Florida Democratic Party began making large disbursements to support Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate.¹ As of the date of this complaint, the Florida Democratic Party has made twenty-four such disbursements totaling \$58,757.04.² By the Florida Democratic Party's own admission, these disbursements were all made for the purpose of supporting Nelson's campaign.

Specifically, each disbursement's reported purpose references "Senate 18/Nelson."³ Many of these disbursements were made for additional reasons such as "cost of campaign staff" and "campaign assistance," making clear that the Florida Democratic Party is subsidizing Nelson's campaign without regard for federal contribution limits.

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974, as amended, ("FECA") provides strict contribution limits for federal elections. For the 2018 election cycle, the FEC has made clear that state parties may only contribute \$5,000 per election to a campaign for U.S. Senate.⁴

As outlined by the Code of Federal Regulations, "*anything of value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for Federal office is a contribution.*"⁵ This includes paying for campaign staff and consulting services. Indeed, the FEC website specifically sets out such disbursements as an example of in-kind contributions: "a committee makes an in-kind contribution when it: pays for consulting, polling or printing services provided to a candidate committee."⁶ Additionally, the FEC has made clear that "when a person or entity pays for services on the committee's behalf, the payment is an in-kind contribution. An expenditure made by any person or entity in cooperation, consultation or concert with, or at the request or suggestion of, a candidate's campaign is also considered an in-kind contribution to the candidate."⁷ Given that the Florida Democratic Party is reporting payment for Nelson's campaign staff, these were clearly made in concert with Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate.

¹ https://www.fec.gov/data/disbursements/?two_year_transaction_period=2018&data_type=processed&committee_id=C00005561&min_date=01%2F01%2F2017&max_date=08%2F30%2F2018&disbursement_description=Nelson (accessed 8/30/18); *see also*, Exhibit A for a summary of these disbursements.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ <https://transition.fec.gov/info/contriblimitschart1718.pdf> (accessed 8/30/18).

⁵ 11 CFR 100.52(a) (emphasis added).

⁶ <https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/making-disbursements-pac/making-kind-contributions-candidates/> (accessed 8/30/18).

⁷ <https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/filing-reports/in-kind-contributions/> (accessed 8/30/18).

The Florida Democratic Party is limited to contributing \$5,000 per election to Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate. By the Florida Democratic Party's own admission in their public reports to the FEC, they have far exceeded this contribution limit.

Importantly, these disbursements were reported as itemized disbursements on Schedule B, making clear that they were not 'coordinated party expenditures' reported on Schedule F. Given that twenty-four disbursements were made over a substantial period of time, this is not a mere reporting error.

Interestingly enough, Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate has failed to report accepting *any* contributions from the Florida Democratic Party.⁸ This is in direct violation of 11 CFR 110.9, which mandates that "[n]o candidate or political committee shall knowingly accept any contribution or make any expenditure in violation of the provisions of 11 CFR part 110. No officer or employee of a political committee shall knowingly accept a contribution made for the benefit or use of a candidate, or make any expenditure on behalf of a candidate, in violation of any limitation imposed on contributions and expenditures under this part 110."⁹ Since these disbursements related to campaign staff, printing campaign material, and consulting services, there is no doubt that Nelson's campaign is aware of these contributions. Indeed, many of the disbursements for campaign staff have gone to recipients who hold themselves out as employees of Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate.¹⁰

Given both committees long familiarity with Federal elections, it is clear that they are attempting to use each other to skirt around contribution limits. Although Nelson's political career began before the FEC was established in 1974, we are confident that he is aware that Federal elections are regulated.

As such, we respectfully request the Commission to investigate this excessive contribution scheme and to reprimand both committees accordingly.

Relief Sought

Wherefore, the Commission should find reason to believe that Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate and the Democratic Executive Committee of Florida have violated numerous FEC regulations and conduct an immediate investigation under 52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(1). Further, the Commission should determine and impose appropriate sanctions for any and all violations, should enjoin the

⁸https://www.fec.gov/data/receipts/?two_year_transaction_period=2018&data_type=processed&committee_id=C00344051&contributor_name=C00005561&min_date=01%2F01%2F2017&max_date=08%2F30%2F2018 (accessed 8/30/18).

⁹ 11 CFR 110.9.

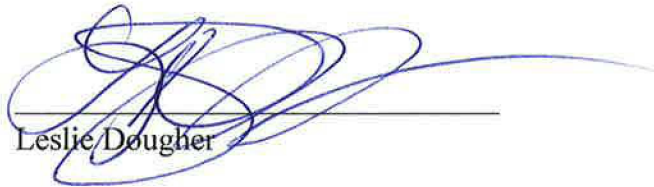
¹⁰ Exhibit B.

respondents from any and all violations in the future, and should impose such additional remedies as are necessary and appropriate to ensure compliance with the FECA.

September 10, 2018

The aforementioned is correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Respectfully submitted,



Leslie Dougher

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me on this 10 day of SEPT, 2018.



Notary Public

My commission expires:

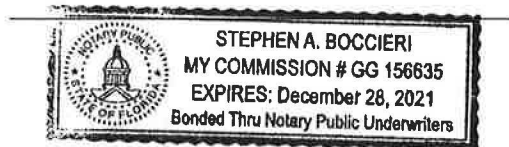


EXHIBIT A

Since June 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee of Florida has disbursed at least \$58,757.04 to support Bill Nelson's Senate Re-election Campaign.

- In June 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$4,116.86 To Eleazar Melendez For "Cost Of Campaign Staff/Senate18/Nelson/N"
- In June 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$961.26 To Danielle Robinson For "Cost Of Campaign Staff/Senate18/Nelson/N"
- In June 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$1,131.25 To Sarah Muller For "Cost Of Campaign Staff/Senate18/Nelson/N"
- In June 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$2,000.49 To Alicia Tighe For "Cost Of Campaign Staff/Senate18/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$2,176.37 To Alicia Tighe For "Cost Of Campaign Staff/Senate 18/Nelson/"
- In June 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$2,462.50 To Payroll Matters For "Payroll Taxes/Senate/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$6,793.97 To Payroll Matters For "Payroll Taxes/Senate/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$6,359.18 To Printmeisters, Inc. For "Printing Signs/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$28.35 To HM Life Insurance Company For "Vision Insurance/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$34.07 To Principal Financial Group For "Health Benefits/USS?Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$3,401.52 To Blue Cross And Blue Shield Of Florida For "Health Insurance/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$5,000.00 To Daniel McLaughlin For "Communication Consulting/Senate/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$8,000.00 To Gregory Goddard For "Campaign Assistance/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$3,600.00 To Christina Diamond For "Fundraising/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$3,058.00 To Stefanie Sass, Inc For "Fundraising Consulting/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$5,000.00 To Sam Ritzman For "Research Consulting/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$883.22 To Nathan Evans For "Staff Reimbursement/Senate18/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$1,000.00 To Daniel Cooper For "Finance Consulting/USS/Nelson/N"
- In July 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$2,750.00 To Jeremy Gold For "Finance Consulting/USS/Nelson/N"

EXHIBIT B

- 1. Gregory Goddard is currently the Finance Director for Senator Bill Nelson.** (Gregory Goddard, [LinkedIn](#), Accessed 8/30/18). **On July 11, 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida Disbursed \$5,000.00 To Gregory Goddard For “Campaign Assistance/USS/Nelson/N”** (Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida August 2018, [Federal Election Commission](#), Disbursed 7/11/18, Accessed 8/30/18).

Experience



Finance Director
 Senator Bill Nelson
 Jan 2017 – Present • 1 yr 8 mos

Full Name (Last, First, Middle Initial) B. Goddard, Gregory, . . .			Date of Disbursement 07 / 11 / 2018		
Mailing Address: 31 W Adams St Apt 1207			FEC Identification Number C Transaction ID: VQZC2AEK32 Amount of Each Disbursement this Period 5000.00		
City Jacksonville	State FL	Zip Code 32202-3652	Candidate Name USS/ Nelson/ N		
Purpose of Disbursement Campaign Assistance/ USS/ Nelson/ N		Category Type 001		Memo Item	
Office Sought House Senate President	Disbursement For Primary General Other (specify)				
State District					

- 2. Christina Diamond is the owner of Diamond Strategies and has received a \$5,000 disbursement from the Democratic Executive Committee of Florida.** (Christina Diamond, [LinkedIn](#), Accessed 8/30/18).



Owner
 Diamond Strategies, LLC
 Mar 2016 – Present • 2 yrs 6 mos
 St Petersburg, FL

Political Campaign Fundraising and Consulting Firm

Full Name (Last, First, Middle Initial) C. Diamond, Christina, . . .			Date of Disbursement 07 / 24 / 2018		
Mailing Address: 154 7th Avenue NE			FEC Identification Number C Transaction ID: VQZC2AEFG Amount of Each Disbursement this Period 3600.00		
City St Petersburg	State FL	Zip Code 33701-2518	Candidate Name Fundraising/ USS/ Nelson/ N		
Purpose of Disbursement Fundraising/ USS/ Nelson/ N		Category Type		Memo Item	
Office Sought House Senate President	Disbursement For Primary General Other (specify)				
State District					

Bill Nelson For U.S. Senate has reported paying Diamond Strategies \$172,250 during the 2017-18 cycle. (Sen. Bill Nelson Expenditures, [OpenSecrets](#), Accessed 8/30/18)

3. **Stefanie Sass is the Deputy Finance Director for Bill Nelson for U.S. Senate.** (Stefanie Sass, [LinkedIn](#), Accessed 8/30/18). **On July 24, 2018, The Democratic Executive Committee of Florida disbursed \$3,058.00 to Stefanie Sass, Inc. for “Fundraising/USS/Nelson/N”** (Democratic Executive Committee Of Florida August 2018, [Federal Election Commission](#), Disbursed 7/24/18, Accessed 8/30/18)

Full Name (Last, First, Middle Initial) A. Stefanie Sass, Inc			Date of Disbursement 07 24 2018	
Mailing Address 2063 NE 182Nd St				
City North Miami Beach	State FL	Zip Code 33162-1827		
Purpose of Disbursement Finance Consulting/ USS/ Nelson/ N			007	FEC Identification Number C
Candidate Name			Category: Type	Transaction ID : VQZCJAEF0 Amount of Each Disbursement this Period 3058.00
Office Sought	House Senate President	Disbursement For Primary General Other (spooly) ▼		
State	District	Memo (am)		



Deputy Finance Director
Bill Nelson for US Senate
 Apr 2017 – Present • 1 yr 5 mos
 Miami/Fort Lauderdale Area