

BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
ENFORCEMENT PRIORITY SYSTEM
DISMISSAL REPORT

MUR: 7731

Respondents: Fischbach for Congress and
Paul Kilgore in his official
capacity as treasurer¹

Complaint Receipt Date: Apr. 28, 2020

Michelle Fischbach
Minnesota Citizens Concerned
For Life, Inc. Federal PAC and
Catherine Blaeser in her official
capacity as treasurer
National Right to Life Victory
Fund and Wayne Cockfield in
his official capacity as treasurer
Scott Fischbach
Darla St. Martin

Response Dates: June 17, 2020, Aug. 21, 2020

**Alleged Statutory and
Regulatory Violations:**

**52 U.S.C. §§ 30104(b); 30116(a), (f); 30118(a)
11 C.F.R. §§ 104.3; 110.1; 110.9**

The Complaint alleges that Michelle Fischbach and Fischbach for Congress (the “Fischbach Committee”) coordinated communications with Minnesota Citizens Concerned For Life, Inc. Federal PAC and Catherine Blaeser in her official capacity as treasurer (“MCCL PAC”) and National Right to Life Victory Fund and Wayne Cockfield in his official capacity as treasurer (“NRLVF”), resulting in unreported and prohibited in-kind contributions. The allegations are based on the positions Fischbach’s husband and mother allegedly held in those organizations at the time of the communications.² Specifically, according to the Complaint, Fischbach’s husband Scott Fischbach served as Executive Director of MCCL PAC and Fischbach’s mother Darla St. Martin

¹ Michelle Fischbach was a 2020 candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in Minnesota’s Seventh Congressional District. Fischbach for Congress is her principal campaign committee.

² Compl. at 1-2 (April 28, 2020).

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served as Co-Executive Director of NRLVF.³ Based on these factors, the Complaint alleges reported independent expenditures totaling \$23,397.42 by MCCL PAC and NRLVF on February 12 and 13, 2020, were in fact coordinated communications that constitute unreported and prohibited in-kind contributions to Fischbach and the Fischbach Committee.⁴

In their Responses, Fischbach, the Fischbach Committee, MCCL PAC, and NRLVF assert that familial relationships alone do not support a coordination finding.⁵ The PAC/Fund Response further asserts that NRLVF and MCCL PAC took affirmative steps to avoid coordinating communications with Fischbach's campaign,⁶ stating that both MCCL, Inc. and NRLC set up "firewalls" between Fischbach's husband and mother and the organizations' federal campaign activity in Minnesota.⁷

Based on its experience and expertise, the Commission has established an Enforcement Priority System using formal, pre-determined scoring criteria to allocate agency resources and

³ Compl. at 1-2, 4. MCCL PAC is registered with the Commission as a separate segregated fund ("SSF") of Minnesota Citizens Concerned For Life, Inc. FEC Form 1, Minn. Citizens Concerned for Life, Inc. Federal PAC, Amended Statement of Organization at 2 (Oct. 8, 2020). NRLVF is registered with the Commission as an independent expenditure-only political committee ("IEOPC"), and is associated with the National Right to Life Committee, a nationwide federation of state affiliates and local chapters. *About the Victory Fund*, National Right to Life Victory Fund, <https://www.nrlvictoryfund.org/> (last visited December 16, 2020). According to the MCCL PAC/NRLVF Response, Scott Fischbach was Executive Director of Minnesota Citizens Concerned For Life, Inc., and St. Martin was Co-Executive Director of National Right to Life Committee. MCCL PAC and NRLVF Resp. at 3 (Aug. 21, 2020) ("PAC/Fund Resp.").

⁴ Compl. at 3-4. MCCL PAC and NRLVF each filed a 48-Hour Report of independent expenditures in identical amounts of \$11,698.71 with public distribution dates of February 12 and February 13, 2020, respectively, for "IE-Fischbach-Direct Mail" (MCCL PAC) and "IE-Fischbach, Michelle-Direct Mail" (NRLVF). <https://docquery.fec.gov/cgi-bin/fecimg/?202002139186502046> and <https://docquery.fec.gov/cgi-bin/fecimg/?202002149186504307>.

⁵ Michelle Fischbach and Fischbach Committee Resp. at 2-3 (June 17, 2020) ("Fischbach Resp."); PAC/Fund Resp. at 2-3).

⁶ PAC/Fund Resp. at 3.

⁷ The MCCL PAC/NRLVF Response provides sworn declarations from five individuals connected to National Right to Life Committee and NRLVF and Minnesota Citizens Concerned For Life, Inc. and MCCL PAC asserting that there was no coordination regarding the mailers. *Id.* at 3-7; see Karen Cross Decl. ¶¶ 5, 6, 9-14, 17, 21 (July 30, 2020) (Political Dir., Nat'l Right to Life Comm.); Leo LaLonde Decl. ¶¶ 6-8, 13, 15, 17, 21 (July 31, 2020) (Pres., Minn. Citizens Concerned for Life); David O'Steen Decl. ¶¶ 6, 7 (Aug. 3, 2020) (Exec. Dir., Nat'l Right to Life Comm., Inc.); Jacki Ragan Decl. ¶¶ 4-5, 9 (July 31, 2020) (Dir. of State Org. Dev., Nat'l Right to Life Comm.); Paul Stark Decl. ¶¶ 4, 6 (July 30, 2020) (Commc'ns Dir., Minn. Citizens Concerned for Life).

1 assess whether particular matters warrant further administrative enforcement proceedings. These
2 criteria include (1) the gravity of the alleged violation, taking into account both the type of activity
3 and the amount in violation; (2) the apparent impact the alleged violation may have had on the
4 electoral process; (3) the complexity of the legal issues raised in the matter; and (4) recent trends in
5 potential violations and other developments in the law. This matter is rated as low priority for
6 Commission action after application of these pre-established criteria. Given that low rating and the
7 low dollar amount at issue, we recommend that the Commission dismiss the Complaint consistent
8 with the Commission's prosecutorial discretion to determine the proper ordering of its priorities and
9 use of agency resources.⁸ We also recommend that the Commission close the file and send the
10 appropriate letters.

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13 Acting General Counsel
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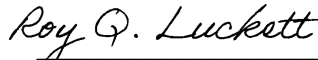
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19 March 31, 2022

20 Date

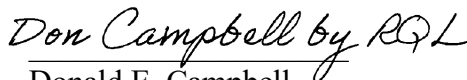
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⁸ *Heckler v. Chaney*, 470 U.S. 821, 831-32 (1985).