



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

March 3, 2025

**VIA UPS DELIVERY AND ELECTRONIC MAIL**

[crisericson@yahoo.com](mailto:crisericson@yahoo.com)

Cris Ericson  
879 Church Street  
Chester, VT 05143

RE: MUR 8065  
VTDigger, *et al.*

Dear Ms. Ericson:

This is in reference to the complaint filed with the Federal Election Commission on September 14, 2022, concerning VTDigger, *et al.* Based on that complaint, and after considering the circumstances of this matter and information provided in response to the complaint, the Commission determined to dismiss this matter and close the file effective March 3, 2025.

The General Counsel's Report, which more fully explains the basis for the Commission's decision, is enclosed. Documents related to the case will be placed on the public record today. *See* Disclosure of Certain Documents in Enforcement and Other Matters, 81 Fed. Reg. 50,702 (Aug. 2, 2016).

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended, allows a complainant to seek judicial review of the Commission's dismissal of this action within 60 days of the dismissal, which became effective today. *See* 52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(8).

Sincerely,

Lisa J. Stevenson  
Acting General Counsel

*Wanda D. Brown*

BY: Wanda D. Brown  
Assistant General Counsel

Enclosure  
General Counsel's Report

**BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION**

**ENFORCEMENT PRIORITY SYSTEM**

**DISMISSAL REPORT**

**MUR 8065**

**Respondents:** VTDigger  
 Necrason Group, PLLC  
 Peter Welch  
 Welch for Vermont and Julia Drost in  
 her official capacity as treasurer  
 Gerald Malloy  
 Gerald Malloy for US Senate, Limited  
 and Thomas Datwyler in his official  
 capacity as treasurer  
 Vermont Public Co.  
 Public Broadcasting Service  
 WCAX-TV  
 [REDACTED]

**Complaint Receipt Dates:** Sept. 14, 2022; Sept. 26, 2022 (Supp. Compl.);  
 Oct. 5, 2022 (Supp. Compl.); Nov. 2, 2022 (Supp. Compl.)

**Last Response Date:** June 13, 2024

[REDACTED]

**Alleged Statutory/  
 Regulatory Violations:** 52 U.S.C. §§ 30116(a)(1)(A), 30118(a)  
 11 C.F.R. §§ 110.1(b)(1), 110.13(a)(2), (b), (c), 114.2, 114.4(f)

The Complaint alleges that the Complainant, Cris Ericson, a 2022 independent candidate for U.S. Senate in Vermont, was wrongfully excluded from three general election debates between Peter Welch, the Democratic Party candidate, and Gerald Malloy, the Republican Party candidate, hosted by VTDigger, Vermont Public Co., and WCAX-TV (“WCAX”), resulting in prohibited in-kind corporate contributions from those Respondents to Welch and Malloy, in violation of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended (the “Act”).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compl. at 1 (Sept. 14, 2022); First Supp. Compl. at 1 (Sept. 26, 2022); Third Supp. Compl. at 1 (Nov. 2, 2022). Ericson received 1,105 or 0.4% of the total votes cast in the general election. Cris Ericson, BALLOTPEDIA, [https://ballotpedia.org/Cris\\_Ericson](https://ballotpedia.org/Cris_Ericson) (last visited Dec. 12, 2024).

1            Respondents deny the allegations. The staging organizations all contend that they used pre-  
 2   established, objective criteria and that Ericson did not satisfy the selection criteria.<sup>2</sup> WCAX further  
 3   argues that its activities are protected under the press exemption.<sup>3</sup> Necrason Group, PLLC which is  
 4   alleged to have staged the debate with VTDigger, responds that it only sponsored the debate and  
 5   had no input regarding the candidate selection process.<sup>4</sup> The Public Broadcasting Service responds  
 6   that it had no role in staging the debate with Vermont Public.<sup>5</sup> Malloy states that he was not  
 7   involved in the decision to exclude Ericson.<sup>6</sup> Welch submitted a Response, in which his principal  
 8   campaign committee Welch for Vermont and Julia Drost in her official capacity as treasurer (the  
 9   “Welch Committee”) later joined,<sup>7</sup> stating that he was not involved in the decision to exclude  
 10   Ericson.<sup>8</sup>

11            [REDACTED]  
 12   [REDACTED]  
 13   [REDACTED]  
 14   [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
 15   [REDACTED]

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<sup>2</sup> VTDigger Resp. at 3 (Oct. 5, 2022); Vermont Public Co. Resp. at 1 (Mar. 22, 2024); WCAX Resp. at 10-12 (Mar. 21, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> WCAX Resp. at 8-10.

<sup>4</sup> Necrason Group, PLLC Resp. at 4 (Oct. 5, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Public Broadcasting Service Resp. at 1 (Mar. 5, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> Malloy Resp. at 2 (Sept. 30, 2022).

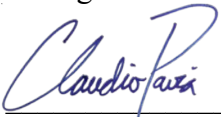
<sup>7</sup> Welch for Vermont Resp. at 1 (June 13, 2024).


<sup>8</sup> Welch Resp. at 2 (Dec. 16, 2022).

1            [REDACTED]  
 2   [REDACTED]

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 assess whether particular matters warrant further administrative enforcement proceedings. These criteria include (1) the gravity of the alleged violation, taking into account both the type of activity and the amount in violation; (2) the apparent impact the alleged violation may have had on the electoral process; (3) the complexity of the legal issues raised in the matter; and (4) recent trends in potential violations and other developments in the law. This matter is rated as low priority for Commission action after application of these pre-established criteria. Given that low rating, we recommend that the Commission dismiss the Complaint, consistent with the Commission's prosecutorial discretion to determine the proper ordering of its priorities and use of agency resources.<sup>11</sup> We also recommend that the Commission close the file effective 30 days from the date the certification of this vote is signed (or on the next business day after the 30th day, if the 30th day falls on a weekend or holiday) and send the appropriate letters.

December 20, 2024  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Lisa J. Stevenson  
Acting General Counsel  
BY:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Claudio J. Pavia  
Deputy Associate General Counsel

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Wanda D. Brown  
Assistant General Counsel

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gordon King  
Attorney

<sup>11</sup> *Heckler v. Chaney*, 470 U.S. 821, 831-32 (1985).