



Michigan Department of State Campaign Finance and Financial Disclosure Complaint Form

CLEAR FORM

This complaint form may be used to file a complaint alleging that someone violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA), the Candidate for Office Financial Disclosure Act, or the Public Officers Financial Disclosure Act (financial disclosure acts). Electronic submission of the form to BOERegulatory@michigan.gov is strongly recommended. For instructions on how to complete this form, see the Campaign Finance and Financial Disclosure Complaint Guidebook document. All spaces are required unless otherwise indicated.

Section 1. Complainant

Your name

Douglas A. Geiss

Daytime telephone number

313-244-5836

Mailing address

24645 Muirfield Drive

City

Taylor

State

MI

Zip

48180

Email (recommended)

dougegeiss@yahoo.com

Section 2. Alleged Violator (Respondent)

Name

Judge Joseph Slaven

Mailing address

23rd District Court 23365 Goddard Rd.

City

Taylor

State

MI

Zip

48180

Email (recommended)

Committee ID (optional)

CTE Mike Timney 14462 Dean St. Taylor MI 48180

Please include email addresses to expedite processing time and mitigate mail delays.

Section 3. Allegations (use additional sheets if more space is needed)

I allege a violation of the following:

- MCFA
- Public officer disclosure
- Candidate disclosure

Identify the section(s) of the MCFA or relevant financial disclosure act section(s) alleged to be violated and explain how the section(s) were violated:

MCFA, Act 388 of 1976, Section 169.257

Violations:

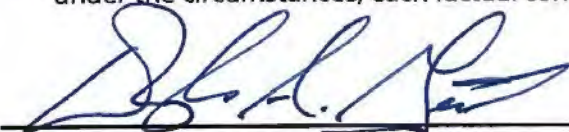
1. Judge Joseph Slaven used the 23rd District Court building, after normal business hours, to produce a campaign ad for the CTE Mike Tinney, advocating for the election of Mike Tinney
2. The 23rd District Court building is owned by the City of Taylor and is located at 23365 Goddard Road in Taylor, Michigan.
3. It is a violation to "use or authorize the use of funds, personnel, office space" under Section 169.257

Evidence included with the submission of the complaint that supports the allegations:

"Slaven Talking about Mike Tinney" screenshot from YouTube.
Downloaded copy available if video has been deleted.
Screenshots show the use of Judge Joseph Slaven's courtroom and the CTE Mike Tinney disclaimer.

Section 4. Certification (required)

I certify that to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, formed after a reasonable inquiry under the circumstances, each factual contention of this complaint is supported by evidence.



Signature of complainant

11/2/2024

Date

Section 5. Certification without Evidence *(supplemental to Section 4)*

If, after a reasonable inquiry under the circumstances, you are unable to certify that certain factual contentions are supported by evidence as indicated above, you may make the following certification:

I certify that to the best of my knowledge, information, or belief, there are grounds to conclude that the following specifically identified factual contentions are likely to be supported by evidence after a reasonable opportunity for further inquiry. Those specific contentions are:

Signature of Complainant

Date

Section 15(8) of the MCFA provides that a person who files a complaint with a false certification is responsible for a civil violation of the MCFA. The person may be required to pay a civil fine of up to \$1,000 and some, or all, of the expenses incurred by the Michigan Department of State and the alleged violator as a direct result of the filing of the complaint. MCL 169.215(16).

The financial disclosure acts prohibit a person from filing a complaint with a false certification. MCL 169.313(7); MCL 15.713(7).

Section 6. Submission

Once completed, submit the complaint form with your evidence to BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov. Alternatively, you may mail or hand deliver the complaint form with your evidence to the address below. The complaint is considered filed upon receipt by the Bureau of Elections.

Michigan Department of State
Bureau of Elections
Richard H. Austin Building - 1st Floor
430 West Allegan Street
Lansing, Michigan 48918

Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 169.257 (West)

Sec. 57. (1) A public body or a person acting for a public body shall not use or authorize the use of funds, personnel, office space, computer hardware or software, property, stationery, postage, vehicles, equipment, supplies, or other public resources to make a contribution or expenditure or provide volunteer personal services that are excluded from the definition of contribution under section 4(3)(a). This subsection does not apply to any of the following:

(a) The expression of views by an elected or appointed public official who has policy making responsibilities.

f) An elected or appointed public official or an employee of a public body who, when not acting for a public body but is on the public official's or employee's personal time, is expressing the public official's or employee's personal views, is expending the public official's or employee's personal funds, or is providing the public official's or employee's personal volunteer services.

(2) Except for an election official in the performance of the election official's duties under the Michigan election law, 1954 PA 116, MCL 168.1 to 168.992, a public body, or a person acting for a public body, shall not, during the period 60 days before an election in which a local ballot question appears on a ballot, use public funds or resources for a communication by means of radio, television, mass mailing, or prerecorded telephone message if that communication references a local ballot question and is targeted to the relevant electorate where the local ballot question appears on the ballot.

(3) A person that knowingly violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable, if the person is an individual, by imprisonment for not more than 1 year or a fine of not more than \$1,000.00, or both,

From the Michigan Municipal League:

Campaign Finance Act Don'ts

1) Don't use city or village funds, municipal-owned office space, or other property to expressly advocate a vote for or against a candidate or ballot question. "Expressly advocate" means to state support for the passage or defeat of a ballot question or the election or defeat of a candidate—in other words, to say "Vote yes for" (or no) or "Support" (or defeat) a candidate or ballot question.



Description



Slaven Talking about Mike Tinney

0
Likes

3,060
Views

Oct 24
2024

Transcript

Follow along using the transcript.

Show transcript



Mike Tinne...
1 subscriber

Subscribe



Videos

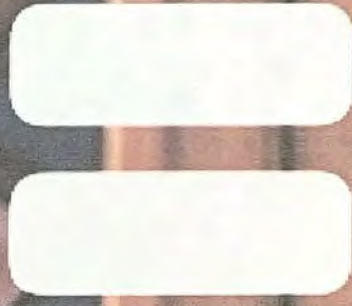


About

NOTE

TINNEY

Judge



HONORABLE
JOSEPH D.
SLAVEN

CTE Mike Tinney 14462 Dean St. Taylor, MI 48180



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

December 26, 2024

Joseph Slaven
23365 Goddard Road
Taylor, MI 48180

Re: *Geiss v. Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven,

The Department of State (Department) has received a formal complaint filed against you by Douglas Geiss alleging that you violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA or Act). Specifically, the complaint alleges that you used public resources to influence an election. A copy of the complaint is included with this notice.

In Michigan, it is unlawful for a public body or an individual acting on its behalf to use or authorize the use of equipment, supplies, personnel, funds, or other public resources to make a contribution or expenditure. MCL 169.257(1). The words “contribution” and “expenditure” are terms of art that are generally defined to include a payment or transfer of anything of ascertainable monetary value made for the purpose of influencing the election of or made in assistance of a candidate. MCL 169.204(1), 169.206(1). An individual who knowingly violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 1 year or a fine of not more than \$1,000.00, or both. MCL 169.257(4).

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the Department’s examination of these matters and your right to respond to the allegations before the Department proceeds further. It is important to understand that the Department is neither making this complaint nor accepting the allegations as true. The investigation and resolution of this complaint is governed by section 15 of the Act and the corresponding administrative rules, R 169.51 *et seq.* An explanation of the process is included in the Department’s campaign finance complaint [guidebook](#).

If you wish to file a written response to this complaint, you are required to do so within 15 business days of the date of this letter. Your response may include any written statement or additional documentary evidence you wish to submit. Materials may be emailed to BOERegulatory@michigan.gov or mailed to the Department of State, Bureau of Elections, Richard H. Austin Building, 1st Floor, 430 West Allegan Street, Lansing, Michigan 48918. If you

fail to submit a response, the Department will render a decision based on the evidence furnished by the complainant.

A copy of your answer will be provided to Douglas Geiss, who will have an opportunity to submit a rebuttal statement to the Department. After reviewing the statements and materials provided by the parties, the Department will determine whether “there may be reason to believe that a violation of [the MCFA] has occurred [.]” MCL 169.215(10). Note that the Department’s enforcement powers include the possibility of entering a conciliation agreement, conducting an administrative hearing, or referring this matter to the Attorney General for enforcement.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, you may contact the Regulatory Division of the Bureau of Elections at BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

Enclosure

c: Douglas Geiss



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

March 25, 2025

SECOND NOTICE

Joseph Slaven
23365 Goddard Road
Taylor, MI 48180

Re: *Geiss v. Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven,

The Department of State (Department) has received a formal complaint filed against you by Douglas Geiss alleging that you violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA or Act). Specifically, the complaint alleges that you used public resources to influence an election. A copy of the complaint is included with this notice.

The Department sent you notice of this complaint on December 26, 2024. That letter informed you that you had 15 business days from that date to provide a response to the complaint. **As a courtesy, the Department is extending you an opportunity to submit a response within 15 business days of the date of this second notice.** If you do not submit a response within 15 business days of the date of this notice, the Department will have no choice but to adjudicate the complaint based on the facts and allegations included in the complaint alone.

In Michigan, it is unlawful for a public body or an individual acting on its behalf to use or authorize the use of equipment, supplies, personnel, funds, or other public resources to make a contribution or expenditure. MCL 169.257(1). The words "contribution" and "expenditure" are terms of art that are generally defined to include a payment or transfer of anything of ascertainable monetary value made for the purpose of influencing the election of or made in assistance of a candidate. MCL 169.204(1), 169.206(1). An individual who knowingly violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 1 year or a fine of not more than \$1,000.00, or both. MCL 169.257(4).

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A copy of your answer will be provided to Douglas Geiss, who will have an opportunity to submit a rebuttal statement to the Department. After reviewing the statements and materials provided by the parties, the Department will determine whether “there may be reason to believe that a violation of [the MCFA] has occurred [.]” MCL 169.215(10). Note that the Department's enforcement powers include the possibility of entering a conciliation agreement, conducting an administrative hearing, or referring this matter to the Attorney General for enforcement.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, you may contact the Regulatory Division of the Bureau of Elections at BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

Enclosure
c: Douglas Geiss

NOW COMES HON. JOSEPH D. SLAVEN IN PROPRIA PERSONA, AND STATES IN RESPONSE THE COMPLAINT FILED BY GEISS THE FOLLOWING

AS TO SECTION 1 OF THE COMPLAINT, JUDGE JOSEPH D. SLAVEN IS UNAWARE OF DOUGLAS GEISS' ADDRESS AND LEAVES THE COMPLAINANT TO HIS PROOFS;

AS TO SECTION 2 OF THE COMPLAINT, JUDGE JOSEPH D. SLAVEN DOES WORK FOR THE 23RD DISTRICT COURT OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN AND THAT IS THE PROPER ADDRESS OF THE SAME; HOWEVER, JUDGE SLAVEN WAS NOT A MEMBER OF, AGENT FOR OR REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CTE MIKE TINNEY;

AS TO SECTION 3 OF THE COMPLAINT AND THE ALLEGATIONS MADE THEREIN, JUDGE JOSEPH D. SLAVEN STATES THE FOLLOWING:

SEC 3, 1. DENIED. 2. ADMITTED. 3. DENIED. JUDGE SLAVEN, FOR ALL THE REASONS STATED IN THE ARGUMENT SECTIONS BELOW, WAS LAWFULLY IN HIS COURTROOM PUSUANT TO MCR 8.115 AND THE MICHIGAN CONSTITUTION AT A TIME WHEN THERE WERE NO COURT PROCEEDINGS OR DOCKET SCHEDULED AND DID VOLUNTEER HIS OWN PERSONAL SERVICE IN THE MAKING OF A PERSONAL VIDEO (NOT A CAMPAIGN AD) ON HIS OWN PERSONAL TIME, REGARDING HIS OWN PERSON VIEWS, ALL OF WHICH IS LEGALLY PERMISSIBLE UNDER THE EXCEPTIONS OF MCL 169.257 1(a) and 1(f). ADDITIONALLY, I DID AUTHORIZE, PURSUANT TO MY AUTHORITY UNDER MCR 8.115, THE USE OF THE ELECTRONIC DEVICE UTILIZED TO MAKE MY PERSONAL VIDEO.

AS TO SECTION 3 OF THE COMPLAINT ENTITLED "EVIDENCE INCLUDED WITH THE SUBMISSION OF THE COMPLAINT THAT SUPPORTS THE ALLEGATIONS," JUDGE SLAVEN STATES THAT THE PHOTOS SHOWN ARE NOT PART OF THE PERSONAL VIDEO MADE BY ME. I DID NOT MODIFY, EDIT, ADD OR CHANGE ANY PART OF THE VIDEO OF MY PERSONAL VIEW. I AM NOT AWARE OF WHO ACTUALLY ADDED ANYTHING TO MY VIDEO AS SEEN IN THOSE PICTURES. ADDITIONALLY, I DID NOT UPLOAD ANY VIDEO TO YOUTUBE OR ANY OTHER MEDIA SITE/APPLICATION.

JUDGE SLAVEN'S RESPONSES ABOVE ARE SUPPLIMENTED IN THREE MAIN ARGUMENTS FOUND BELOW. EACH ARGUMENT, ALONE AND/OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE ANOTHER, IS SUFFICIENT GROUNDS TO DISMISS THIS FRIVOULOUS COMPLAINT.

AGRUMENT 1

FIRST AMENDMENT PROTECTIONS REGARDING FREE SPEECH AND ENDORSMENTS OF CANDIDATES

BACKGROUND HISTORY AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

Filming in a public government buildings is generally considered constitutional and is a form of protected speech under the First Amendment. Citizens have the right to photograph or record visible aspects of public spaces, including government buildings. The restrictions that the government may impose on private speakers who seek to use public property for their speech depend on the type of

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AAAF

“forum” that is at issue. Minnesota Voters All. v Mansky, 585 US 1, 12 (2018). The Supreme Court has recognized three types of forums: “traditional public forums, designated public forums, and nonpublic forums.” *Id.* “Nothing in the Constitution requires the Government freely to grant access to all who wish to exercise their right to free speech on every type of Government property without regard to the nature of the property or to the disruption that might be caused by the speaker's activities.” Cornelius v. NAACP Legal Defense & Ed. Fund, Inc., 473 U.S. 788, 799–800 (1985).

The Supreme Court first analyzed the constitutional implications of electronic media in the courtroom in Estes v. Texas, 381 U.S. 532, 85 S.Ct. 1628, 14 L.Ed.2d 543 (1965). The Supreme Court later revisited Estes in its Chandler v. Florida, 449 U.S. 560, 101 S.Ct. 802, 66 L.Ed.2d 740 (1981) decision. In Chandler, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Florida's Judicial Canon, which authorized judges to permit audio-visual coverage of court proceedings, even over a defendant's objection in a criminal proceeding.

In Mezibov v Allen, 411 F.3d 712, 718 (CA 6, 2005), the Court explained that when a courtroom is in session “attorneys and other trial participants do not lose their constitutional rights at the courthouse door.” Levine v. United States Dist. Court for the Cent. Dist. of Cal., 764 F.2d 590, 595 (9th Cir.1985). The courtroom is a nonpublic forum at that point, where the First Amendment rights of everyone (attorneys included) are at their constitutional nadir. In fact, the courtroom is unique even among nonpublic fora because within its confines we regularly countenance the application of even viewpoint-discriminatory restrictions on speech. The right to access, like many aspects of the First Amendment, is not absolute. *Id.* Courtrooms' participants, including observing members of the public, are subject to unique constraints that do not apply in other public spaces. Somberg v Cooper, 582 F Supp 3d 438, 444 (ED Mich), lv den sub nom. In re Somberg, 31 F.4th 1006 (CA 6, 2022).

Key points about filming in public government buildings:

Public view is key:

- You can generally film anything that is plainly visible from a public area within a government building, including employees carrying out their duties.
- Restrictions on disruptive behavior:
- While filming is generally allowed, disruptive behavior or interference with government operations could lead to limitations or restrictions.

TURNING NOW TO “EMPLOYEES/OFFICIALS/PUBLIC OFFICERS”

Freedom of association means not only that an individual voter has the right to associate with the political party or candidate of their choice. Eu v San Francisco Cnty. Democratic Cent Comm, 489 US 214, 224; 109 S Ct 1013; 103 L Ed 2d 271 (1989).

Free Speech allows citizens to endorse candidates that they support, “individual person's right to speak includes the right to speak *in association with other individual persons.*” Citizens United v Fed Election Comm'n, 558 US 310, 392 (2010).

In Pickering v. Board of Education, 391 U.S. 563 (1968), the United States Supreme Court addressed whether a public employee was wrongfully terminated for exercising his First Amendment right to free speech and explained that resolution of the issue required “arriv[ing] at a balance between the interests of the [employee], as a citizen, in commenting upon matters of public concern and the interest of the State, as an employer, in promoting the efficiency of the public services it performs

through its employees." Under the *Pickering* framework, an employee is entitled to protection under the First Amendment if he or she spoke as a private citizen on a matter of public concern and where the state cannot show that its interest in the efficient provision of public services outweighs the employee's interest in commenting on the matter of public concern.

In *Pickering*, supra at 569, the Court reasoned that the employee/official's interests in speaking on a matter of public concern outweighed any interest asserted by the government, because there was no indication that the speech "interfered with the regular operation of the government facility generally" or affected the speaker's "proper performance of his daily duties in his official capacity..." *Id.* at 572–573. This U.S. Supreme Court reasoning is followed in Michigan, see, *Shirvell v Dep't of Attorney Gen*, 308 Mich App 702, 737–38; 866 NW2d 478 (2015). It is also the reason for the exceptions found in the Michigan Campaign Finance Act.

Whether an employee spoke as a citizen on a matter of public concern involves a question of law for the court to decide. *Rorrer v. City of Stow*, 743 F.3d 1025, 1047 (C.A.6 2014). Resolving this issue requires consideration of "the content, form, and context of a given statement, as revealed by the whole record." *Connick*, 461 U.S. at 147–148, 103 S.Ct. 1684. "[P]ublic concern is something that is a subject of legitimate news interest; that is, a subject of general interest and of value and concern to the public at the time of publication." *San Diego v. Roe*, 543 U.S. 77 (2004). "But the speech need not address a topic of great societal importance, or even pique the interest of a large segment of the public..." *Craig v. Rich Twp. High Sch. Dist.* 227, 736 F.3d 1110, 1116 (C.A.7 2013). "That the public was not large, that the issues were not of global significance ... [does] not place ... speech outside the orbit of protection." *Shirvell v Dep't of Attorney Gen*, 308 Mich App 702, 734–35; 866 NW2d 478 (2015)

AS THE RULES SPECIFICALLY APPLY TO JUDGES, JUDICIAL RACES AND COURTROOMS

Specific rules and canons should be used and applied when it comes to the actions of Judges. *Adair v State, Dept of Ed*, 474 Mich 1027 (2006). In *People v Loew*, No. 164133, 2024 WL 3433870 (Mich, July 16, 2024), reh den 10 NW3d 664 (Mich, 2024), the Michigan Court said, "We implemented the Michigan Code of Judicial Conduct in 1974 to provide ethical guidance to jurists in the discharge of their duties. See *Attorney General v Pub. Serv. Comm.*, 243 Mich App 487, 492, 625 N.W.2d 16 (2000). A judge's violation of a canon may be grounds for us to exercise our power to discipline that judge, see MCR 9.202(B)(2); Const. 1963, art. 6, § 30, but the canons do not grant litigants any substantive or procedural rights.

If a judge's conduct is either expressly permitted or expressly forbidden by another specific canon, the Supreme Court will not sanction the judge for violating the Code of Judicial Conduct canon prohibiting a judge from failing to avoid the appearance of impropriety. *People v Loew*, No. 164133, 2024 WL 3433870 (Mich, July 16, 2024), reh den 10 NW3d 664 (Mich, 2024)

This is why in Michigan, courtroom decorum is governed by MCR 8.115. That Rule covers any and all photography or use of any electronic communication device in a courtroom. The rule states:

RULE 8.115 COURTROOM DECORUM; POLICY REGARDING USE OF CELL PHONES OR OTHER PORTABLE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES

(A) Display of Flags. The flags of the United States and of the State of Michigan must be displayed in a conspicuous place adjacent to the bench at all times when court is in session.

(B) Judicial Robe. When acting in his or her official capacity in the courtroom, a judge shall wear a black robe.

(C) Use of Portable Electronic Devices in a Courthouse.

(1) Purpose. This rule specifies the permitted and prohibited uses of portable electronic devices in a courthouse. A court must use reasonable means to advise courthouse visitors of the provisions of this rule. Any allowed use of a portable electronic device under this rule is subject to the authority of a judge to terminate activity that is disruptive or distracting to a court proceeding, or that is otherwise contrary to the administration of justice. This rule does not modify or supersede the guidelines for media coverage of court proceedings set forth in AO No. 1989-1.

(2) Definitions. The following definitions apply in this rule:

(a) "portable electronic device" is a mobile device capable of electronically storing, accessing, or transmitting information. The term encompasses, among other things, a transportable computer of any size, including a tablet, a notebook, and a laptop; a smart phone, a cell phone, or other wireless phone; a camera and other audio or video recording devices; a personal digital assistant (PDA); other devices that provide internet access; and any similar items.

(b) A "courthouse" includes all areas within the exterior walls of a court building, or if the court does not occupy the entire building, that portion of the building used for the administration and operation of the court. A "courthouse" also includes areas outside a court building where a judge conducts an event concerning a court case.

(c) A "courtroom" includes the portion of a courthouse in which the actual proceedings take place.

(3) Photography and audio or video recording, broadcasting, or live streaming. Except for requests for film or electronic media coverage of court proceedings as permitted under AO No. 1989-1, the following restrictions apply to photography, audio recording, video recording, broadcasting, or live streaming in a courthouse.

(a) In a courtroom: In a courtroom, no one may use a portable electronic device to take photographs or for audio or video recording, broadcasting, or live streaming unless that use is specifically allowed by the Judge presiding over that courtroom.

(b) Outside a courtroom: In areas of a courthouse other than courtrooms, no one may photograph, record, broadcast, or live stream an individual without that individual's prior express consent.

(c) Jurors: No one may photograph, record, broadcast, or live stream any juror or anyone called to the court for jury service.

(d) Local orders: By local administrative order, a court may adopt further reasonable limits on photography and audio or video recording or broadcasting in a courthouse that are not inconsistent with this rule.

(4) Jurors and witnesses. The following restrictions apply to use of portable electronic devices by jurors, including prospective jurors, and by witnesses.

(a) Jurors: Jurors must turn off their portable electronic devices while present in a courtroom. A court may order jurors to turn over to the court their portable electronic devices during deliberations. If so, the court must provide jurors with a phone number where they can be reached in case of an emergency during deliberations.

(b) Witnesses: A witness must silence any portable electronic device while in a courtroom, and may use a device while testifying only with permission of a judge.

(5) Attorneys, parties, and members of the public. The following provisions apply to use of portable electronic devices in a courtroom by attorneys, parties, and members of the public.

(a) Allowed uses: Attorneys, parties, and members of the public may use a portable electronic device in a courtroom to retrieve or to store information (including notetaking), to access the Internet, and to send and receive text messages or information. Attorneys, parties, and members of the public may use a portable electronic device to reproduce public court documents in a clerk's office as long as the device leaves no mark or impression on the document and does not unreasonably interfere with the operation of the clerk's office.

(b) Prohibited uses: Attorneys, parties, and members of the public must silence portable electronic devices while in the courtroom. A portable electronic device may not be used, without permission of the court, to make or to receive telephone calls or for any other audible function while court is in session. Portable electronic devices may not be used to communicate in any way with any courtroom participant including, but not limited to, a party, a witness, or juror at any time during any court proceedings. Additional prohibited uses related to photography, recording, and broadcasting are found in 8.115(C)(3) above.

(6) Use of a portable electronic device outside a courtroom; limitations. Except as provided in paragraphs (3), (4) and (5) of this rule, a person may use a portable electronic device in a courthouse, subject to the authority of judges, Clerks of the Court, or court administrators to limit or terminate activity that is disruptive to court operations or that compromises courthouse security.

(7) Violations of this rule. If these rules are violated, the presiding judge may confiscate the device for the remainder of the day or order that the phone be turned off and put away. Violations of this rule are punishable by appropriate sanctions up to and including contempt of court as determined in the discretion of the court.

For all of the above reasons, the Complaint file by Geiss is invalid. I, as the presiding Judge of my Courtroom, have total discretion to allow recording in my courtroom. By authority of the Constitution, I have unlimited access to my court building, Courtroom, and chambers at any time. There were no public resources used in making a video. For all the reasons stated herein, above, the complaint filed by Geiss should be summarily dismissed and no further action be taken.

This brings us to the next reason why Geiss and his complaint are invalid.

AGRUMENT 2

The actions of Judge Slaven were not in violation of any statute. As a copy of the statute was sent in the Complain package, we will no turn to the MCL 169.257. The Pickering decision above is the exact reason the highlighted language is found in the statute. MCL 169.257 reads:

169.257 Contributions, expenditures, or volunteer personal services; prohibitions; communication referencing local ballot questions; violation as misdemeanor; penalty.
Sec. 57.

(1) A public body or a person acting for a public body shall not use or authorize the use of funds, personnel, office space, computer hardware or software, property, stationery, postage, vehicles, equipment, supplies, or other public resources to make a contribution or expenditure or provide volunteer personal services that are excluded from the definition of contribution under section 4(3)(a).

This subsection does not apply to any of the following:

(a) The expression of views by an elected or appointed public official who has policy making responsibilities. [UNDER MCR 8.115, I HAVE POLICY MAKING AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY WITH REGARD TO THE DECORUM OF MY COURTROOM AND ANY AND ALL PHOTOS/VIDEOS THAT HAPPEN THEREIN. WHICH IS TRUE DURING COURT SESSIONS AND MORE ASSUREDLY AFTER HOURS WHEN THERE IS NO SESSION]

(b) Subject to subsection (2), the production or dissemination of factual information concerning issues relevant to the function of the public body.

(c) The production or dissemination of debates, interviews, commentary, or information by a broadcasting station, newspaper, magazine, or other periodical or publication in the regular course of broadcasting or publication.

(d) The use of a public facility owned or leased by, or on behalf of, a public body if any candidate or committee has an equal opportunity to use the public facility. [JUDGE SHACKELFORD HAD EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO US THE PUBLIC FACILITIES AT THE COURTHOUSE AND SHE DID. IN FACT SHE USED MANY PUBLIC PLACES OWED BY THE CITY OF TAYLOR, LIKE CITY HALL, SENIOR CENTER AND LAKES OF TAYLOR GOLF COURSE. SEE ALL THE PICTURES BELOW. THERE IS NO PROBLEM WITH THOSE EITHER AS THEY WERE MADE AFTER HOURS AND ON HER OWN TIME AND NOT WHILE COURT WAS IN SESSION, SAME AS JUDGE SLAVEN]

(e) The use of a public facility owned or leased by, or on behalf of, a public body if that facility is primarily used as a family dwelling and is not used to conduct a fund-raising event.

(f) An elected or appointed public official or an employee of a public body who, when not acting for a public body but is on the public official's or employee's personal time, is expressing the public official's or employee's personal views, is expending the public official's or employee's personal funds, or is providing the public official's or employee's personal volunteer services. [THIS LANGUAGE IS RIGHT FROM THE PICKERING CASE. JUDGE SLAVEN WAS ACTING ON HIS OWN TIME, GIVING HIS CONSTITUTIONALLY PROTECTED POLITICAL VIEWS ABOUT A JUDICIAL CANDIDATE AND WAS NOT EXPENDING ANYTHING BUT RATHER WAS VOLUNTEERING HIS OWN PERSONAL TIME.]

For all the reasons stated herein, above, the complaint filed by Geiss should be summarily dismissed and no further action be taken.



JUDGE SHACKELFORD USED THE COURT AND ITS IMAGES MANY WAYS. SHE USED CITY HALL AND THE SENIOR CENTER AND EVEN A PICTURE WITH HER AND GEISS AT THE CITY'S GOLF COURSE LAKES OF TAYLOR. ALL OF THIS IS FINE AS LONG AS IT WAS DONE ON HER OWN PERSONAL TIME AND EXPRESSING HER PERSONAL VIEWS AND NO COURT PROCEEDINGS WERE INTERFERED WITH WHILE DOING SO. SHE HAD UNLIMITED ACCESS TO USE THE SAME FACILITIES.

AGRUMENT 3

Lastly, the video recording of Judge Slaven filmed with his permission, in his courtroom by Mike Tinney is the same as all of these videos below. Supreme Court Justice Bolden makes several videos all using the Michigan Hall of Justice, her personal chambers and the outside décor and even the main hearing grand courtroom. None of these videos are in violation of any statute and neither was Judge Slaven's video for all the same reasons stated herein by Judge Slaven. Please check out the links below as they and the videos they show are incorporated herein by reference.

For all the reasons stated herein, above, the complaint filed by Geiss should be summarily dismissed and no further action be taken.

LINKS AND VIDEOS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Bolden used the Michigan Hall of Justice, her chambers, the grand hall courtroom all to make election campaign videos for herself and in support of then Law Professor, now (post election) Justice Kimberly A. Thomas. These videos below demonstrate that as long as it on your own time and is your own personal view, and is not disrupting any public proceedings, then it is fine for a judge or Justice to use their courtroom, courthouse, robe to make a video supporting judicial candidates.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C-aY9dVOznt/>

https://mycmag.kantarmediana.com/KMlcmagvidbin2/STSUPCT_MI_HARRIS-BOLDEN&THOMAS_ONLY_CHOICE.html

https://mycmag.kantarmediana.com/KMlcmagvidbin2/STSUPCT_MI_JFAMI_REPRODUCTIVE_FREEDOM.html

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBJz6KhpK_N/

https://www.instagram.com/p/C9TVT6XPQn2/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1492704994162289> Hon. Vikki Hayley making a video in her own courtroom after hours for a Judicial candidate that she was supporting and endorsing. This is the video that Judge Slaven saw and was inspired by to make his own video in support of a Judicial candidate he was supporting and endorsing, Mike Tinney.

For all of the reason, precedent, rules, statutes and argumentation herein presented above, Judge Joseph D. Slaven does hereby respectfully request that the BOE find not merit in and that no further action be taken with regard to this complaint and that it be *dismissed*.



Hon. Joseph D. Slaven

State of Michigan
23rd Judicial District

Judge
Joseph D. Slaven

~~████████████████████~~
23365 Goddard Road • Taylor, Michigan 48180-4163



DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BUREAU OF ELECTIONS
Richard H. Austin Building, 1st Floor
430 West Allegan Street
Lansing, MI 48918





STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

May 9, 2025

Joseph Slaven
23365 Goddard Road
Taylor, MI 48180

Re: *Geiss v. Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven,

The Department of State (Department) has finished investigating the campaign finance complaint filed against you by Douglas Geiss alleging that you violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA or Act). This letter concerns the disposition of that complaint.

The complaint alleged that you improperly used the public courtroom for campaign purposes in violation of Section 57 of MCFA. The complaint included a link to a video where you used the court room to produce a campaign video for CTE Mike Tinney.

You did not provide a response to the allegations.

The MCFA prohibits a public body or an individual acting on its behalf from “us[ing] or authoriz[ing] the use of funds, personnel, office space, computer hardware or software, property, stationery, postage, vehicles, equipment, supplies, or other public resources to make a contribution or expenditure.” MCL 169.257(1). The words “contribution” and “expenditure” are generally defined, in pertinent part, to include anything of ascertainable monetary value that is used to influence or assist a candidate’s nomination or election. MCL 169.204(1), 169.206(1).

Section 57 of the Act specifically covers elected officials, but does provide some narrow exceptions.¹ One of the exceptions is for “[t]he expression of views by an elected or appointed public official who has policy making responsibilities.” MCL 169.257(1)(a). However, the Department addressed whether the endorsement of a candidate by a public official using public

¹ See MCL 169.257(1)(a)-(f).

funds falls under this exception in its Interpretive Statement to Mr. David E. Murley, issued October 31, 2005. *Interpretive Statement to David Murley* (Oct. 31, 2005).² The Department determined that the use of public funds to endorse a candidate does not fall within this exception.

The Department reasoned:

Consistent with the First Amendment, section 57(1)(a) makes it clear that public officials are entitled to express their views on policy issues. Indeed, public officials have an obligation to take positions on controversial political questions so that constituents are fully informed and better able to assess their qualifications for office. [See OAG, 1969-1970, No 4647, p 87 (September 29, 1969)]. The occasional, incidental use of public resources to communicate with a constituent or the media on a ballot question falls within this exemption, as there are no resources devoted to an effort to assist or oppose the qualification passage or defeat of that question.

However, sending a mass e-mail or mailing that expressly advocates support for a ballot question or candidate or urges constituents to vote for or against a candidate or ballot question would result in the use of public resources to make an expenditure. The use of public resources in this manner falls squarely with the section 57 prohibition against using anything of ascertainable monetary value in assistance of, or opposition to, the nomination or election of a candidate, or the qualification, passage or defeat of a ballot question.

The campaign video that you produced using the public courtroom and expressing your support for Mr. Tinney constitutes a misuse of public resources. The production and dissemination of this video violates Section 57 and does not fall under one of the listed exceptions that would make it a permissible use of public resources.

Based on the above, the Department concludes that the evidence is sufficient to determine that there may be reason to believe that a violation of the Act has occurred. Upon making this determination, the Act requires the Department to “endeavor to correct the violation or prevent a further violation by using informal methods [.]”, and if the Department is unable to correct or prevent additional violations, it must ask the Attorney General to prosecute if a crime has been committed. MCL 169.215(10)(a). The objective of an informal resolution is “to correct the violation or prevent a further violation [.]” *Id.*

Please be advised that if the Department is unable to resolve this informally, it is required by MCL 169.215(10)-(11) to refer to the Department of Attorney General with a request that her office prosecute for the criminal penalties and/or conduct an administrative hearing to enforce the civil penalties. If the Department conducts an administrative hearing, MCL 169.215(11)

² <http://www.mi.gov/documents/2005 - Interpretive Statement 142179 7.pdf>.

Geiss v Slaven
Page 3

authorizes the Secretary of State to seek a civil fine of triple the amount outlined, plus up to \$1,000.00 for each violation of the Act.

Please contact the undersigned at BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov by **September 18th, 2025**, to discuss a resolution to matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Biehl".

James Biehl, Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

C: Douglas Geiss



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

May 14, 2025

Douglas A. Geiss
24645 Muirfield Drive
Taylor, MI 48180
douggeiss@yahoo.com

Re: *Geiss v. Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Douglas Geiss:

The Department of State received a response from Joseph Slaven on April 18, 2025. Since the response from Slaven was received before our determination dated May 9, 2025, we are rescinding our determination to provide you with an opportunity to provide a rebuttal statement. A copy of the response is provided as an enclosure with this letter.

You may file a rebuttal statement after reviewing the enclosed response. If you elect to file a rebuttal statement, you are required to do so within 10 business days of the date of this letter. The rebuttal statement may be emailed to BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov or mailed to the Department of State, Bureau of Elections, Richard H. Austin Building, 1st Floor, 430 West Allegan Street, Lansing, Michigan 48918. After receiving your rebuttal statement or the expiration of 10 business days, the Department will move to the determination stage and make a determination.

Sincerely,

Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

c: Joseph Slaven

Douglas A. Geiss Rebuttal
May 19, 2025

Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State
430 W. Allegan, 1st Floor
Lansing, MI 48918

Re: *Geiss v. Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Regulatory Division:

Thank you for your continued correspondence regarding my above referenced complaint. I have received from your office the following:

- The December 26, 2024 letter confirming my campaign finance violation complaint against Joseph Slaven
- The March 25, 2025 Second Notice letter stating that Joseph Slaven failed to provide a timely response to my original complaint
- The May 9, 2025 letter stating that a determination was made that Joseph Slaven violated the Campaign Finance Act
- The May 14, 2025 letter rescinding your determination letter from May 9, 2025 regarding the Department discovery that a response was received from Joseph Slaven on April 18, 2025

This letter serves as my rebuttal to Joseph Slaven's letter, as provided, dated April 18, 2025.

The body and "agruments" [sic.] sections of Joseph Slaven's response confirm my initial violation claim #24-298 of the MCFA, Act 388 of 1976, Section 169.257, when he admits the following:

- 1) **Judge Joseph Slaven used the 23rd District Court building, after normal business hours, to produce a campaign ad for the CTE Mike Tinney, advocating for the election of Mike Tinney.** *Exact verbiage from initial complaint, rebuttals/comments are as follows:*
 - a. Joseph Slaven calls this a "personal video made by me" thus confirming the video is accurate and his statements shown therein are his own.
 - b. In the video Joseph Slaven states from the bench, "Hi, I'm **Joseph Slaven** from the 23rd District Court...**I'm endorsing** and asking you to join me in [sic.] **vote for Mike Tinney** for 23rd District Court. (Note: Only the beginning and ending of the video comments are transcribed here. Emphasis is on the key words that confirm a violation occurred.)
 - c. Uttering the key phrases, "**I'm endorsing**" and "**vote for Mike Tinney**" are a clear violation of the Campaign Finance Act when spoken utilizing public resources.

- d. Joseph Slaven claims that, "I am not aware of who actually added anything to **my** video" however in argument 3 Slaven states, "The video recording of Joseph Slaven filmed with his permission, in his courtroom by Mike Tinney" and the finished campaign ad from YouTube showing the disclaimer, "CTE Mike Tinney 14462 Dean St. Taylor, MI 48180." The facts disprove this specious assertion.
- e. Further, per Appendix J of the Michigan Campaign Finance Committee Manual Appendixes, "vote for" are magic words that required adherence to statute.

2) **The 23rd District Court building is owned by the City of Taylor and is located at 23365 Goddard Road in Taylor, Michigan.** *Exact verbiage from initial complaint, rebuttals/comments are as follows:*

- a. Again, Joseph Slaven's own words confirm this fact, and that the video was produced inside this location. Cited from Sec 3, "2. Admitted" "Was ... in his courtroom pursuant [sic.] to MCR 8.115 ... at a time when there were no court proceedings or docket scheduled and did volunteer his own personal service in the making of a personal video...."
- b. Joseph Slaven claims under Argument 1 that he has "Freedom of Speech" yet acknowledges there are limits to time, place, and manner on Constitutionally protected speech within his own arguments. Cited from Argument 1, "The restrictions that the government may impose...."
- c. The Michigan Campaign Finance Act as a whole, and Act 388 of 1976, Section 169.257 in particular, could not exist if they were in violation of any of the following:
 - i. The United States Constitution
 - ii. The Constitution of the State of Michigan
 - iii. Any other Michigan Compiled Laws
- d. The Legislative Service Bureau of the State of Michigan Legislature ensures all bills passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor are legal and enforceable. Additionally, no judicial case has struck down the MCFA.
- e. Joseph Slaven seems to confuse pictures taken *outside* of a courthouse, in plain view of the public, which are legal, from video taken in an inaccessible area inside a public building and specifically advocating for the passage or defeat of a candidate or ballot issue, in this case uttering the words, "I'm endorsing" and "Vote for Mike Tinney."
- f. Joseph Slaven also seems to not understand that pictures or video taken during the normal course of business of an elected official in a public building *that do not violate the MCFA* are in the public domain, and therefore free to be used in subsequent campaign material. (Both for or against that elected official.)
- g. Under Argument 2, Joseph Slaven makes the claim that the Chief Judge of the 23rd District Court "did it too." That is patently false, as all pictures shown are from public events not tied to an election (Eg: The Veteran Museum's Breakfast, Portrait Unveiling) and/or outside of public facilities.
- h. In Argument 3, Joseph Slaven continues the same type of deflection based upon the actions of others. Such a claim would never be taken seriously in a Court of Law as an excuse by a defendant. Joseph Slaven is clearly guilty based upon the facts presented.

- 3) It is a violation to “use or authorize the use of funds, personnel, office space” under Section 169.257. *Exact verbiage from initial complaint, rebuttals/comments are as follows:*
- a. Contrary to any claims made by Joseph Slaven, the MCFA prohibits a public body or an individual acting on its behalf from “us[ing] or authoriz[ing] the use of funds, personnel, office space, computer hardware or software, property, stationery, postage, vehicles, equipment, supplies, or other public resources to make a contribution or expenditure.” MCL 169.257(1). The words “contribution” and “expenditure” are generally defined, in pertinent part to include anything of ascertainable monetary value that is used to influence or assist a candidate’s nomination or election. MCL 169.204(1), 169, 206(1).
 - b. Clearly, Joseph Slaven’s actions violate these provisions, and do not fall within any of the exemptions cited. Joseph Slaven was free to express his endorsement and say “Vote for Mike Tinney” *outside* of the 23rd District Courthouse.
- 4) The response sent by Joseph Slaven on April 18, 2025 was 18 business days after the Second Notice dated March 25, 2025. Further, that response was 77 business days after Joseph Slaven was notified of my complaint and 62 business days after a response was legally due. I note that the original letter from the Department stated Joseph Slaven had 15 business days to respond. He did not. Joseph Slaven was given a second notice, giving him an additional 15 business days to respond. He did not. I believe the Department was correct in the determination notice on May 9, 2025 as Joseph Slaven was clearly delinquent in his response to the Department. Rescinding that letter was not necessary; the original conclusion should remain: Joseph Slaven violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act.

Finally, the video that Joseph Slaven recorded using the public courtroom owned by the City of Taylor and expressing his support for Mr. Tinney therein constitutes a misuse of public resources. The production and dissemination of this video violates Section 57 and does not fall under the exceptions that would make it a permissible use of public resources.

I respectfully ask the Department to reaffirm its May 9, 2025 determination that Joseph Slaven violated the MCFA and that you proceed to resolve this issue informally with Joseph Slaven. If that is not successful, I ask that this issue be referred to the Attorney General for prosecution and/or administration hearing.

Sincerely yours,



Douglas A. Geiss
24645 Muirfield Drive
Taylor, Michigan 48180



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

May 21, 2025

Joseph Slaven
26349 Partridge Dr.
Taylor, Michigan 48180

Re: *Geiss v Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven:

The Department of State has received a rebuttal to your response from Douglas Geiss regarding your alleged violation of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act, 1976 P.A. 388, MCL 169.201 *et seq.* A copy of the rebuttal is provided with this letter.

At this point, the Department will commence the determination phase of the campaign finance complaint process, during which time all submitted materials will be reviewed. Within 45 business days of its receipt of the enclosed rebuttal, the Department will make a determination as to whether there may be reason to believe that a violation of the MCFA occurred. If you have any questions about this process, you may contact BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

c. Douglas Geiss



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

July 18, 2025

Joseph Slaven
23365 Goddard Road
Taylor, MI 48180

Re: *Geiss v. Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven,

The Department of State (Department) has finished investigating the campaign finance complaint filed against you by Douglas Geiss alleging that you violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA or Act). This letter concerns the disposition of that complaint.

The complaint alleged that you improperly used the public courtroom for campaign purposes in violation of Section 57 of MCFA. The complaint included a link to a video where you used the court room to produce a campaign video for CTE Mike Tinney.

You responded to the complaint. In your response you made three different arguments contending that there was no violation. First, you contend that your first amendment rights allowed you to endorse another candidate utilizing the public courtroom. Secondly, you argued that your endorsement using the public courtroom was exempt because it involved a policy making responsibility, all candidates had equal access to the courtroom, and constituted a personal expression of views exempt under Section 57. Lastly, you contend that it was permissible because other judicial candidates were using public resources to make endorsements.

Douglas Geiss provided a rebuttal to your response. The response reiterated the contention that the video endorsing Mike Tinney constituted a violation of Section 57 of MCFA. Douglas Geiss requested that the Department reaffirm the decision on May 9, 2025 finding that the actions of producing a campaign video in the public courtroom constitutes a violation of Section 57 of MCFA.

The MCFA prohibits a public body or an individual acting on its behalf from “us[ing] or authoriz[ing] the use of funds, personnel, office space, computer hardware or software, property, stationery, postage, vehicles, equipment, supplies, or other public resources to make a contribution or expenditure.” MCL 169.257(1). The words “contribution” and “expenditure” are generally defined, in pertinent part, to include anything of ascertainable monetary value that is used to influence or assist a candidate’s nomination or election. MCL 169.204(1), 169.206(1).

Section 57 of the Act specifically covers elected officials, but does provide some narrow exceptions.¹ One of the exceptions is for “[t]he expression of views by an elected or appointed public official who has policy making responsibilities.” MCL 169.257(1)(a). However, the Department addressed whether the endorsement of a candidate by a public official using public funds falls under this exception in its Interpretive Statement to Mr. David E. Murley, issued October 31, 2005. *Interpretive Statement to David Murley* (Oct. 31, 2005).² The Department determined that the use of public funds to endorse a candidate does not fall within this exception.

The Department reasoned:

Consistent with the First Amendment, section 57(1)(a) makes it clear that public officials are entitled to express their views on policy issues. Indeed, public officials have an obligation to take positions on controversial political questions so that constituents are fully informed and better able to assess their qualifications for office. [See OAG, 1969-1970, No 4647, p 87 (September 29, 1969)]. The occasional, incidental use of public resources to communicate with a constituent or the media on a ballot question falls within this exemption, as there are no resources devoted to an effort to assist or oppose the qualification passage or defeat of that question.

However, sending a mass e-mail or mailing that expressly advocates support for a ballot question or candidate or urges constituents to vote for or against a candidate or ballot question would result in the use of public resources to make an expenditure. The use of public resources in this manner falls squarely with the section 57 prohibition against using anything of ascertainable monetary value in assistance of, or opposition to, the nomination or election of a candidate, or the qualification, passage or defeat of a ballot question.

The campaign video that you produced using the public courtroom and expressing your support for Mr. Tinney constitutes a misuse of public resources. The production and dissemination of this video violates Section 57 and does not fall under one of the listed exceptions that would make it a permissible use of public resources.

Lastly, the contention that other judicial candidates are using their chambers for political purposes is irrelevant. The Department has consistently held that the use of judicial chambers for campaign purposes violates Section 57 of MCFA.

Based on the above, the Department concludes that the evidence is sufficient to determine that there may be reason to believe that a violation of the Act has occurred. Upon making this determination, the Act requires the Department to “endeavor to correct the violation or prevent a further violation by using informal methods [,]”, and if the Department is unable to correct or

¹ See MCL 169.257(1)(a)-(f).

² <http://www.mi.gov/documents/2005 - Interpretive Statement 142179 7.pdf>.

prevent additional violations, it must ask the Attorney General to prosecute if a crime has been committed. MCL 169.215(10)(a). The objective of an informal resolution is “to correct the violation or prevent a further violation [.]” *Id.*

Please be advised that if the Department is unable to resolve this informally, it is required by MCL 169.215(10)-(11) to refer to the Department of Attorney General with a request that her office prosecute for the criminal penalties and/or conduct an administrative hearing to enforce the civil penalties. If the Department conducts an administrative hearing, MCL 169.215(11) authorizes the Secretary of State to seek a civil fine of triple the amount outlined, plus up to \$1,000.00 for each violation of the Act.

Please contact the undersigned at BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov by **Wednesday November 26th, 2025** to discuss a resolution to matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Biehl".

James Biehl, Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

C: Douglas Geiss



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

October 15, 2025

Joseph Slaven
26349 Partridge Dr
Taylor MI 48180

Re: *Geiss v Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven:

As noted in the letter sent on July 18, 2025, the Department of State (Department) has finished investigating the campaign finance complaint filed against you by Douglas Geiss alleging that you violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA or Act). The Department reviewed the evidence submitted in this matter and found that sufficient evidence has been presented to support the finding of a potential violation of the MCFA. In this letter you were given until **Wednesday November 26, 2025** to contact the undersigned regarding an informal resolution. A copy of that determination is included in this notice.

The Department then began its informal resolution process as outlined in the letter. As a reminder, if no resolution is reached after 90 business days, then the Department will either refer this matter to the attorney general for the enforcement of any criminal penalty provided by this act or commence a hearing for enforcement of any civil violation. MCL 169.215(11).

As a courtesy, The Department is contacting you again to remind you of the expiration of this informal resolution period. Please contact the undersigned at BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov by **Wednesday November 26, 2025** to discuss a resolution to this matter. Should this window for informal resolution expire without contact from you, the Department will proceed with one of the options under MCL 169.215 to formally resolve this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'James Biehl'.

James Biehl, Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Biehl, James \(MDOS\)](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint 24-298
Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 4:23:00 PM

Jimmy,

Moving this one to Active Conciliation

From: MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 3:06 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint 24-298

From: Joseph Slaven <JSlaven@Court23Taylormi.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 3:05 PM
To: MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov>
Subject: Re: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint 24-298

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please send suspicious emails to abuse@michigan.gov

I will be contacting you and look forward to discussing this matter. Are you available for a phone or zoom discussion the week of November 10 - 14?

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 1:10:22 PM
Subject: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint 24-298

Good Afternoon,

Please see the attached.

Bureau of Elections, Regulatory Division
Michigan Department of State

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson
P.O. Box 20126
Lansing, Michigan 48901



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

March 9, 2026

Joseph Slaven
26349 Partridge Dr.,
Taylor, Michigan 48180

Re: *Geiss v Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven:

The Department of State (Department) has concluded its investigation into the complaint filed alleging a violation of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA or Act). Pursuant to Section 15 of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (Act), the Department attempted to resolve this matter through informal methods. Despite these efforts, a resolution was not reached within the required 90 business days.

As a result, the Department will commence an administrative hearing to determine whether a civil violation of the Act has occurred. The hearing shall be conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in Chapter 4 of the Administrative Procedures Act of 1969, 1969 PA 306, MCL 24.271 to 24.287.

A Notice of Hearing will be issued to the respondent only. The complainant will receive no further communication regarding the hearing process unless required by the Department to participate in the hearing. The results of the hearing will be made available on the Department's website once a final decision has been issued. If you have any questions concerning this matter, you may contact the Regulatory Division of the Bureau of Elections at BOERegulatory@Michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

c: Douglas Geiss

From: [MDOS-BOERegulatory](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298
Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 8:30:28 AM

From: Deanna Warunek <DWarunek@Court23Taylormi.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 9, 2026 3:45 PM
To: MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov>
Subject: Re: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

Good afternoon,

I have received and reviewed these documents. Let me know if you need anything from the Court beyond the letter submitted on today's date outlining the estimated costs from the 10-27-24 unauthorized use of the courtroom. Thank you.

Deanna Warunek
Court Administrator
734-374-1338

From: MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 9, 2026 1:46 PM
Subject: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Good Afternoon,

Please review the attached documents.

Bureau of Elections, Regulatory Division
Michigan Department of State
Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson
P.O. Box 20126
Lansing, Michigan 48901

VICTORIA I. SHACKELFORD
District Judge



DEANNA WARUNEK
Court Administrator
dwarunek@court23taylormi.gov

BRITNEY L. CARMONA
Magistrate

MARISSA FOWLER
Deputy Court Administrator
mfowler@court23taylormi.gov

TWENTY-THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN

23365 Goddard Road • Taylor, Michigan 48180-4163 • (734) 374-1334 • FAX: (734) 374-1303
Probation Department (734) 374-1326 • Probation FAX: (734) 374-2756 • Civil Division (734) 374-1328

March 9, 2026

Jimmy Biehl
Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Section
Michigan Bureau of Elections

Re: Estimated Costs for Unauthorized After-Hours Use of Courtroom – October 17, 2024

Dear Mr. Biehl,

The estimated costs from the unauthorized after-hours use of the 23rd District Court courtroom by Joseph Slaven on October 17, 2024, are \$245. This represents the subtotal of direct incremental costs to the court, including facility access equivalent, security overtime, utilities, cleaning, and administrative time. A detailed breakdown of these costs is available upon request.

Please let me know if you need anything further or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Deanna Warunek

Deanna Warunek
Court Administrator

From: [Microsoft Outlook](#)
To: jdslavenesq@gmail.com
Subject: Relayed: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298
Date: Thursday, April 9, 2026 11:46:09 AM
Attachments: [Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298.msg](#)

Delivery to these recipients or groups is complete, but no delivery notification was sent by the destination server:
jdslavenesq@gmail.com (jdslavenesq@gmail.com) <mailto:jdslavenesq@gmail.com>
Subject: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Biehl, James \(MDOS\)](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298
Date: Thursday, April 9, 2026 1:42:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Good Afternoon,
For your review.

[REDACTED]
Executive Secretary
Litigation and Enforcement
MDOS Bureau of Elections
HeebshJ@Michigan.gov

Michigan.gov/VOTE
*Get personalized voter information
on early voting and other topics
at Michigan.gov/Vote*

From: MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2026 1:41 PM
To: Heebsh, Janice (MDOS) <HeebshJ@michigan.gov>
Subject: FW: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

From: JD Slaven <jdslavenesq@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 9, 2026 12:19 PM
To: MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov>
Subject: Re: Geiss v Slaven Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

I called several month ago and emailed stating how this infirmity would not be happening again. I never received any follow up or rejection or objection. Now I am getting this....I retire from the bench by resigning my position brute the end of my term. I'm no longer a public

official so this type of factual situation can't happen again. I can resend my previous email if it got lost in the spam file.

On Thu, Apr 9, 2026, 11:46 AM MDOS-BOERegulatory <MDOS-BOERegulatory@michigan.gov> wrote:

Good Morning,

Please review the attached document.

Bureau of Elections, *Regulatory Division*

Michigan Department of State

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson

P.O. Box 20126

Lansing, Michigan 48901

From: [Biehl, James \(MDOS\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Joseph Slaven - cost of courtroom use
Date: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 3:28:05 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[20260506140836462.pdf](#)

Slaven reimbursed the court so we can avoid an Admin hearing for that one.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Biehl
Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Section
[Michigan Bureau of Elections](#)
Main: (517) 599-7235
Biehlj3@michigan.gov

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From: Deanna Warunek <DWarunek@Court23Taylormi.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 2:56 PM
To: Biehl, James (MDOS) <BiehlJ3@michigan.gov>
Subject: Re: Joseph Slaven - cost of courtroom use

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

Hi again,

His attorney came in and paid. See attached receipt provided. Let me know if you need anything further, at any time!

Deanna

From: Biehl, James (MDOS) <BiehlJ3@michigan.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 12:52 PM
To: Deanna Warunek <DWarunek@Court23Taylormi.gov>

Subject: RE: Joseph Slaven - cost of courtroom use

Deanna,

Thank you very much for the breakdown. I just spoke with Mr. Slaven and he indicated that he hired an attorney for this matter and his attorney will be bringing \$245 cash tomorrow to resolve the issue. If that happens, if you could send me a copy of a receipt that you provide his attorney we can move forward with resolving this issue.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Biehl
Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Section
[Michigan Bureau of Elections](#)
Main: (517) 599-7235
BiehlJ3@michigan.gov

Michigan.gov/VOTE

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From: Deanna Warunek <DWarunek@Court23Taylormi.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 11:59 AM
To: Biehl, James (MDOS) <BiehlJ3@michigan.gov>
Subject: Re: Joseph Slaven - cost of courtroom use

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

Hello Mr. Biehl,

No problem at all, see attached. Payment should be made directly to the 23rd District Court and sent to my attention at the court's address. I presume that question may come up. Feel free to call me if you want to discuss. Thanks.

Deanna Warunek
Court Administrator
734-374-1338

From: Biehl, James (MDOS) <BiehlJ3@michigan.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 11:18 AM
To: Deanna Warunek <DWarunek@Court23Taylormi.gov>
Subject: RE: Joseph Slaven - cost of courtroom use

Deanna,

Thank you for the estimated cost of using the courtroom. Mr. Slaven has reached out and expressed an interest in pursuing an informal resolution and requested a breakdown of the estimated costs. Would you be able to provide that information?

Thank you very much for what you have already done to help resolve this matter.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Biehl
Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Section
[Michigan Bureau of Elections](http://MichiganBureauofElections.com)
Main: (517) 599-7235
BiehlJ3@michigan.gov

Michigan.gov/

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From: Deanna Warunek <DWarunek@Court23Taylormi.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 9, 2026 2:27 PM
To: Biehl, James (MDOS) <BiehlJ3@michigan.gov>
Subject: Joseph Slaven - cost of courtroom use

CAUTION: This is an External email. Please report suspicious emails via the "Report to Abuse" button in Outlook

Mr. Biehl,

Please see attached and let me know if you need further information. Thank you!

Deanna

Deanna Warunek, BS CCJP
Court Administrator
23rd District Court – Taylor
(734) 374-1338

The 23rd District Court is a MiFILE court as of June 5, 2025. All civil filings and correspondence must be filed electronically for all attorneys. Please visit our website, [Civil Division | Taylor, MI](#), for more details on MiFILE.



VICTORIA I. SHACKELFORD
Chief Judge



BRITTANY A. JOHNSON
District Judge

DEANNA WARUNEK
Court Administrator
dwarunek@court23taylormi.gov

BRITNEY L. CARMONA
Magistrate

TWENTY-THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN

23365 Goddard Road • Taylor, Michigan 48180-4163 • (734) 374-1334 • FAX: (734) 374-1303
Probation Department (734) 374-1326 • Probation FAX: (734) 374-2756 • Civil Division (734) 374-1328

May 6, 2026

This shall serve as official receipt of payment from Attorney Edward Zelenak, on behalf of Joseph Slaven, in the amount of \$245 cash. These funds are being paid as reimbursement to the court, and City of Taylor funding unit, for unauthorized after-hours use of courtroom #2 in 23rd District Court on 10/17/24. See attached breakdown which was submitted to Michigan Bureau of Elections 5/6/26 upon their request.

Edward Zelenak on behalf of Joseph Slaven

P27611

Sincerely,

Deanna Warunek
Court Administrator
(734) 374-1338

Cost Component	Description	Rate Basis (Local / Michigan Comparables)	Subtotal	Estimated Cost (0.75-Hour Effective Use)
Facility Rental (Courtroom Access)	After-hours access to premium courtroom space for video production.	\$50-\$100/hour (Wayne County filming venue avg. \$71/hour; Taylor small rentals \$10-\$20/hour base, upscaled for exclusivity/security).	\$56 (midpoint)	\$56
Security/Overtime	Monitoring by 1-armed court security officer (required for after-hours/unauthorized access; overtime rate).	\$30 per hour OT rate for court officer	\$30	\$23
Utilities (Lighting, HVAC, Power)	Incremental use for lighting, AC/heating in ~1,200 sq ft courtroom during off-hours.	\$10-\$20/hour (prorated MI commercial rates ~\$0.05-\$0.08/sq ft at ~\$0.12/kWh).	\$11	\$11
Cleaning & Maintenance	Post-use janitorial for bench, floors, and minor residue (low impact with 3 people).	\$100-\$200 flat fee (Wayne County public services avg.; scaled down for short/small event).	\$112	\$112
Administrative Time	Access oversight (likely minimal but required).	Court Administrator wages	\$43	\$43
Subtotal: Direct Costs			\$245	
Grand Total Estimated FMV			\$245	

Cost breakdown for unauthorized after-hours use of 23rd District Court courtroom #2 on October 17, 2024.

Prepared by Deanna Warunek, Court Administrator

Requested by Michigan Bureau of Elections 5/6/26



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

May 11, 2026

Joseph Slaven
23365 Goddard Road
Taylor, MI 48180

Re: *Geiss v. Slaven*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 24-298

Dear Joseph Slaven,

The Department of State (Department) was informed by the 23rd District Court on May 6, 2026 that you had reimbursed the court for the estimated cost related to the Department's July 18, 2025 determination that there may be reason to believe that you violated the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA or Act).

The email from the 23rd District Court included a receipt indicating that \$245 has been repaid for the alleged violations in MCFA Complaint 24-298.

Given this, the Department concludes that a formal warning is a sufficient resolution to the complaint and considers the matter concluded. Thank you for your prompt resolution of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Biehl".

James Biehl, Regulatory Attorney
Regulatory Division
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

C: Douglas Geiss