

Michigan Campaign Finance Complaint

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MICHIGAN DEPT OF STATE
2022 JUN 28 AM 9:35
ELECTIONS/GREAT SEAL

Section 1. Complainant

Name: Matthew Ross Schonert

Daytime Telephone Number: +1 (231) 250-9931

Mailing Address: 22050 Boulder Ave, Eastpointe, MI 48021

Email: mrschonert@gmail.com

Section 2. Alleged Violator

Name: Michael Jones

Mailing Address: 23740 LEXINGTON AVE, EASTPOINTE, MI 48021

Email: michael.jones02@detroitk12.org

Section 3. Allegations

Sections of MCFA alleged to be violated:

169.247

Explain how those sections were violated:

1. Michael Jones ran for an Eastpointe City Council seat in 2021.
2. Yard signs and hand-held signs jointly promoting Jones and Shenita Lloyd (another candidate in the same race) did not include an identifier. There was no "paid for by" statement on the signs.
 - o His committee name was not on the signs.
 - o His committee address was not on the signs.
3. Jones appears in a photograph holding one of the signs. He is in front of a table with campaign literature displayed. Next to him is Lloyd, who was also holding one of the signs.
4. Jones made several posts on Facebook featuring a close-up photograph of a campaign sign which lacked the identifier.

Committee Name: SUPPORTERS FOR MIKE JONES (ID: 140113)

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

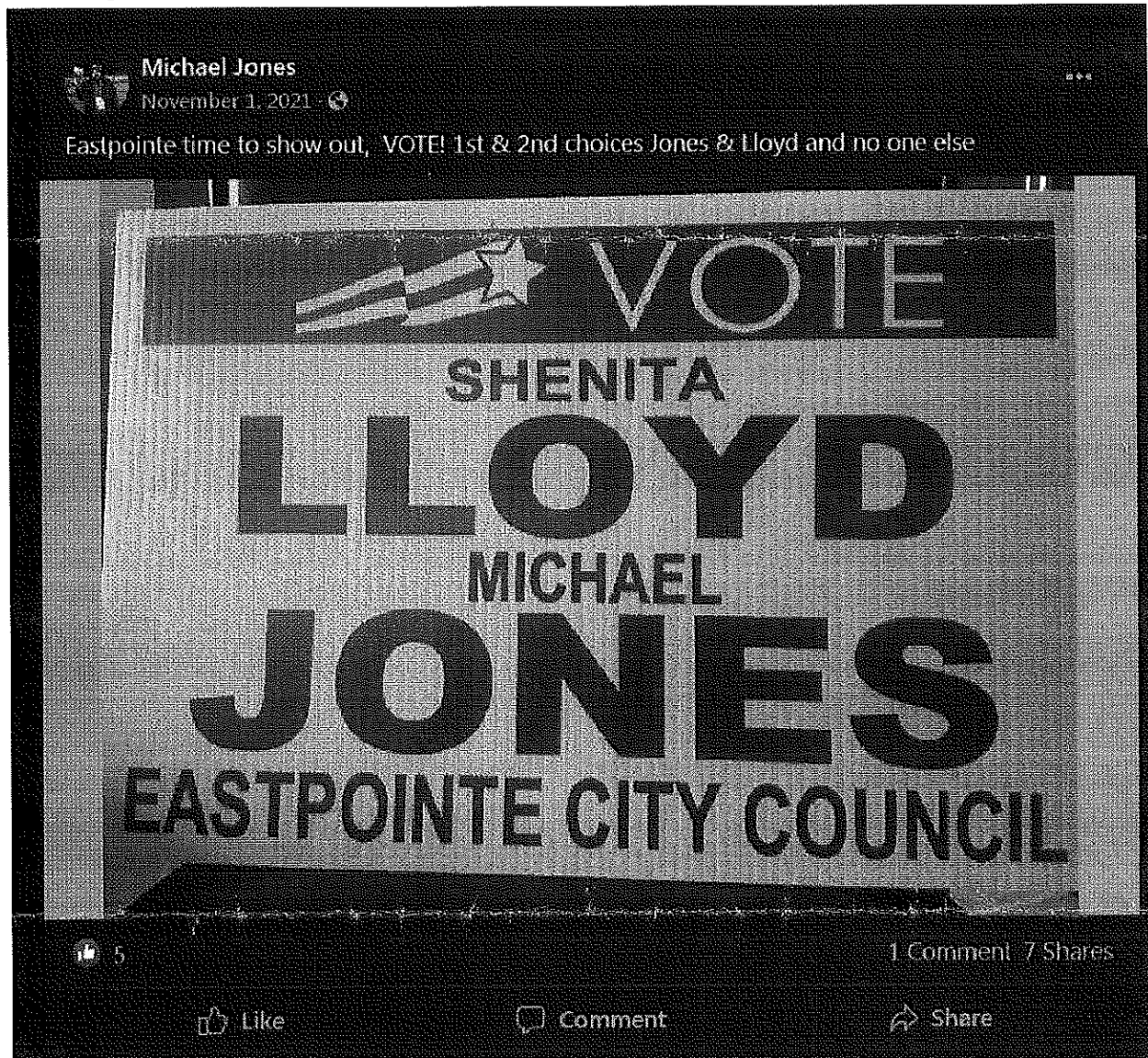
Election results showing that Jones was a city council candidate in the Nov. 2, 2021 election:
<https://electionresults.macombgov.org/m33/eastpointe.html>

Photo of Michael Jones and another candidate, Shenita Lloyd. Both are holding the signs.



A screenshot of a Facebook post from Michael Jones featuring a Lloyd/Jones campaign sign with no identifier.

URL: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2075602662605622>



(evidence continues on next page)

A screenshot of another Facebook post from Michael Jones featuring a Lloyd/Jones campaign sign with no identifier.

URL:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid033BDFm8JAp7WAP2zJxE748oD1xAudJL3CcdrTzsQ1NWRJUXyVGZo6H9syzn6NkrJF1&id=100004677247521

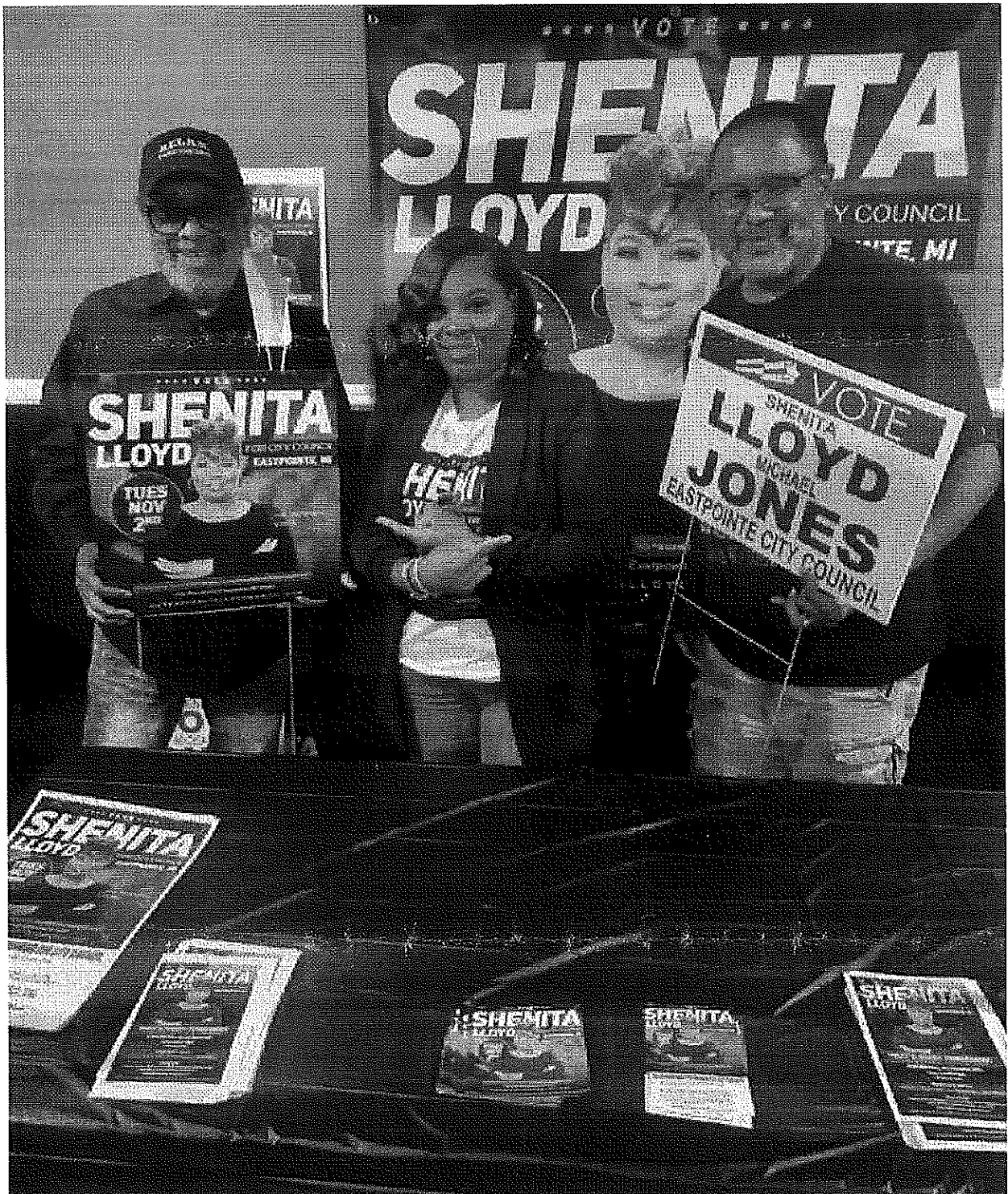


(evidence continues on next page)

A photo of Lloyd, who appears to be distributing Lloyd/Jones signs at a store.



A photo of Lloyd and a man holding a Lloyd/Jones sign (yellow background) with no identifier.



Section 4. Certification

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.

X Mr. Reid 06/22/2022
Signature of Complainant 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:

N/A

X _____
Signature of Complainant Date

Section 6. Submission

This complaint is hereby submitted to:

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



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

July 29, 2022

Via Email at michaeljones02@detroitk12.org

Mr. Michael Jones
23740 Lexington Avenue
Eastpointe, MI 48021

Re: *Schonert v. Jones*
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 2022-06-32-247

Dear Mr. Jones:

The Department of State (Department) has received a formal complaint alleging you have violated MCL 169.247 of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA) by failing to include campaign identifiers on yard signs and hand-held signs; a copy of the complaint is enclosed.

The MCFA and corresponding administrative rules require a person who produces printed material that relates to an election include the phrase "Paid for by [name and address of the person who paid for the item]." MCL 169.247(1), R 169.36(2). A knowing violation constitutes a misdemeanor offense punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000.00, imprisonment for up to 93 days, or both. MCL 169.247(6).

Upon review, the evidence submitted supports the conclusion that a potential violation of the Act has occurred. From the outset, the Department must consider whether the materials fall within the ambit of the MCFA. Because the materials explicitly advocate for the election or defeat of a candidate, or for the passage or defeat of a ballot proposal, the materials contain express advocacy as defined by the Act. MCL 169.206(2)(j). As explained above, such materials must contain a "paid for by" statement listing the name and address of the committee purchasing the materials. However, the evidence shows that the materials at issue here omit part or all of that required statement. That absence supports the conclusion that a potential violation of the MCFA has occurred.

After reaching this conclusion, the Act requires the Department to "endeavor to correct the violation or prevent a further violation by using informal methods" if it finds that "there may be reason to believe that a violation ... has occurred [.]". MCL 169.215(10). The objective of an informal resolution is "to correct the violation or prevent a further violation." *Id.*

Given this, the Department concludes that a formal warning is a sufficient resolution to the complaint and is hereby advising you that MCL 169.247(1) and R 169.36(2) require you to print

Mr. Michael Jones

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a complete and accurate identification statement on all campaign materials, consisting of the phrase "paid for by" followed by the full name and address of your committee.

Note that all printed materials referencing you or your candidacy produced in the future must include this identification statement. For all materials currently in circulation, the paid for by statement must be corrected. If this information has been included in your materials and you wish to rebut the Department's conclusion, you must respond in writing to the Department within 15 business days of the date of this letter otherwise the Department will treat the complaint as resolved.

Please be advised that this notice has served to remind you of your obligation under the Act to identify your printed matter and may be used in future proceedings as evidence that tends to establish a knowing violation of the Act. A knowing violation is a misdemeanor offense and may merit referral to the Attorney General for enforcement action. MCL 169.247(6), 215(10).

Sincerely,

Regulatory Section
Bureau of Elections
Michigan Department of State

Attachment

c: Mr. Matthew Ross Schonert – Via Email at mrschonert@gmail.com