



STATE OF MAINE  
COMMISSION ON GOVERNMENTAL ETHICS  
AND ELECTION PRACTICES  
135 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0135

To: Commission  
From: Jonathan Wayne, Executive Director  
Date: May 24, 2023  
Re: Resolution of Staff Review of 2022 Mark Lawrence Campaign

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In 2022, State Senator Mark Lawrence participated in the Maine Clean Election Act (MCEA) program for his re-election campaign. The Commission paid him \$62,350 in MCEA funds and received back \$5,681 in unspent campaign funds. During the campaign, Sen. Lawrence relied on a campaign manager and a treasurer.

In late January 2023, in the course of conferring with the Commission staff regarding his 24-hour reporting, Sen. Lawrence told us he had reviewed his bank statements and identified a few transactions that his campaign did not disclose in campaign finance reports. He described three transactions as fraudulent charges and said no one associated with his campaign knew how these charges were made.

At its February meeting, the Commission authorized the staff to investigate these debits and the reporting issues Sen. Lawrence had identified. The staff believes all issues have been satisfactorily resolved.

*Unauthorized debits.* The three unauthorized debits, made during April-August 2022, included a payment to an individual for an unknown purpose and payments for trash hauling and natural gas delivery. The campaign caught the third debit and had it reversed.

The Commission staff subpoenaed records from the gas utility and trash hauling payment platform. The records identified an individual in York County who received the gas and trash hauling services.

We interviewed the bank's deposit operations manager about the debits. Her examination of the transactions indicated they were due to an error by another depositor whose account number was the same as Sen. Lawrence's except for the last digit. The manager is convinced that the other depositor made the three payments through an online form or by phone, and mistakenly provided the wrong account number. The manager indicated this kind of error

happens regularly. She confirmed that the depositor is the same individual who had received the gas and trash hauling services. The bank mailed the Commission a check for \$340 to reverse the two debits which the campaign did not catch in time. This amount has been deposited in the Maine Clean Election Fund. Given the bank's explanation, there is no reason to believe anyone in Sen. Lawrence's campaign is responsible for the debits.

*Other issues.* Sen. Lawrence's campaign omitted reporting two seed money contributions totaling \$150. Based on bank records, the Commission staff identified the contributions and corrected the seed money report. While omissions are regrettable, candidates sometimes contact the Commission to say they missed reporting one or two transactions when filing campaign finance reports. Unless the transactions are so large that the reports are substantially incomplete, our only action is to ask the candidates to amend the reports. The Commission staff recommends no action on these two reporting errors totaling \$150 and hopes the event will serve as a caution for the future.

In January, Sen. Lawrence also reported to the Commission that his campaign had accidentally not reported a \$76.99 travel reimbursement to his campaign manager. Sen. Lawrence agreed that this travel reimbursement was a duplicate and has returned the funds to the Commission.

*Staff recommendation.* Because the issues have been resolved satisfactorily, the Commission staff recommends taking no further action.