

The University of Alabama
Student Government Association
Student Elections Board Ruling

ELECTION: Spring 2023 SGA General Election

HEARING DATE: Monday, February 27, 2023

COMPLAINANT: Robbie Khalil

ALLEGED: John Richardson, Presidential Candidate

ELECTION CODE VIOLATION: XIV.A. Only UA students eligible to vote in an SGA election or groups comprised exclusively of UA students eligible to vote may, with prior approval of the candidate, publicly endorse a candidate and XIV.B. Candidates may be contacted by any University of Alabama registered organization for the purposes of speaking at meetings to seek endorsements. Any public endorsement must include the disclaimer statement below: *(Organization name) endorses (candidate name) for (insert position). Our members' votes are their own and they have the right to choose whether to vote and whom to vote for. We encourage all voters to research any and all candidates and to decide for themselves.*

ELECTIONS BOARD DECISION: By a vote of 7-0, the Elections Board found the Richardson Campaign in violation of Election Code XIV.B. The Elections Manual explicitly states that *any* student can commit a campaign violation, and therefore, it is the responsibility of the candidate to communicate the election guidelines to their campaign team and supporters. As such, it is the opinion of the Board that the endorsement statement should have been communicated to the organization and utilized in the @artsandsciencesambassadors story. The quick response and subsequent actions by the Richardson Campaign to have the story removed were, however, factors in the Board's decision to reduce the point violation.

PENALTY: The Richardson Campaign is awarded 1.5 points for a minor campaign violation.

Q1.1.

The University of Alabama Student Government Association

ELECTIONS VIOLATION COMPLAINT FORM *All information/blanks must be completed in order to be reviewed by the Elections Board*

Any member of The University of Alabama community shall have the right to file a complaint. Complaints must be filed in writing. Oral complaints will not be accepted.

Complaints must contain the following:

1. Name of the candidate and/or individual(s) who committed the alleged violation
2. Brief description of the alleged violation, including date and time of the incident and reference to the relevant provisions of the [Student Elections Board Manual](#)
3. Any applicable evidence
4. Printed name of the person filing the complaint
5. Signature of the person filing the complaint

No anonymous complaints will be reviewed. Further, complaints must be filed within 24 hours of the violation or within 24 hours of when the violation is known.

If you have questions regarding filing an Elections Violation Complaint Form, please email sgaelections@ua.edu.

Q1.2. Name of person filing complaint:

Robbie Khalil

Q1.3. Phone Number:

[REDACTED]

Q1.4. UA Crimson Email Address:

[REDACTED]

Q1.5. Date of Incident/Violation: (mm/dd/yyyy)

02/20/2023

Q1.6.

ALLEGED

Person(s) committing the alleged violation and for whom, the complaint is being filed against.

John Richardson

Q1.7.

ELECTION CODE VIOLATIONS

List specific election codes that were allegedly violated. Refer to the [Elections Manual](#) for the relevant provisions of the code.

XIV. ENDORSEMENTS A. Only UA students eligible to vote in an SGA election or groups comprised exclusively of UA students eligible to vote may, with prior approval of the candidate, publicly endorse a candidate. B. Candidates may be contacted by any University of Alabama registered organization for the purposes of speaking at meetings to seek endorsements. Any public endorsement must include the disclaimer statement below: (Organization name) endorses (candidate name) for (insert position). Our members' votes are their own and they have the right to choose whether to vote and whom to vote for. We encourage all voters to research any and all candidates and to decide for themselves.

Q1.8.

DESCRIPTION/NARRATIVE

Please provide a brief description of the alleged violation, including date, time, and location of the incident; along with a list of individuals who may have knowledge of the alleged violation.

The Arts and Sciences Ambassadors posted a photo with the caption, "Congratulations to Ambassador John Richardson on his candidacy for SGA President. Make sure to vote on February from 7am-7pm. Don't forget to #risewithrichardson" This is a clear endorsement and did not include the endorsement statement. 2/20/2023 at 10:51am Location: instagram Individuals: John Richardson, College of A&S Ambassadors

Q2.1.

APPLICABLE EVIDENCE

Attach additional information and/or files for consideration.



Q2.2.

PRINTED NAME

Please type your full name to indicate that you understand that this complaint report is not confidential and may be posted publicly per Section XVIII.F. VIOLATIONS of the Elections Manual.

Robbie Khalil

Q2.3.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE & POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Knowingly filing a frivolous or bad faith complaint may result in the individual or campaign filing the complaint being subject to sanctions and/or referral to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC).

By signing below, I confirm my understanding of the aforementioned Elections Board policy on filing complaints and certify that all information contained in this report is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

A signature is required to submit this form. Please sign below using your mouse cursor (or finger, if you are using a tablet or other mobile device with touchscreen capabilities) to indicate your acceptance of the above stated terms.



A digital signature box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written over a horizontal line. On the left side of the line, there is a small 'x' icon. On the right side of the line, there is a small red 'clear' button. The signature itself is a cursive-style name that appears to be 'R. A. M.' followed by a wavy line.

Subject: Re: Elections Board Notice of Reported Campaign Violation #4
Date: Monday, February 20, 2023 at 10:52:44 PM Central Standard Time
From: Zach Johnson [REDACTED]
To: sgaelections <sgaelections@ua.edu>

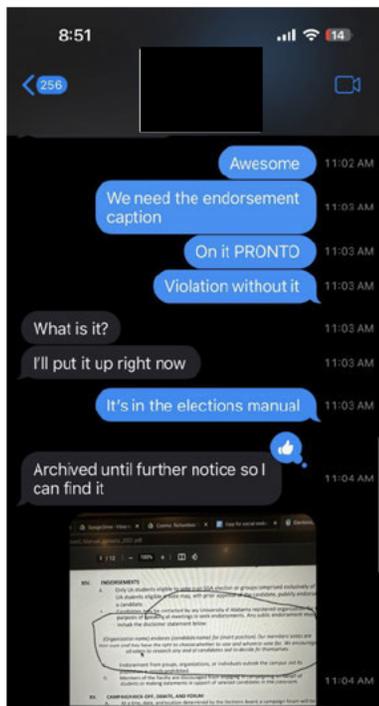
Good evening Elections Board members and thank you for reaching out!

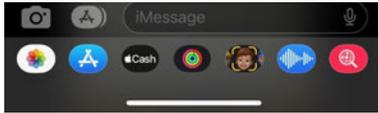
I'll be responding to our third and fourth campaign violation complaints regarding the Arts and Sciences Ambassadors Instagram posts. The charges are as follows:

XIV.A. Only UA students eligible to vote in an SGA election or groups comprised exclusively of UA students eligible to vote may, with prior approval of the candidate, publicly endorse a candidate and
XIV.B. Candidates may be contacted by any University of Alabama registered organization for the purposes of speaking at meetings to seek endorsements. Any public endorsement must include the disclaimer statement below: (Organization name) endorses (candidate name) for (insert position). Our members' votes are their own and they have the right to choose whether to vote and whom to vote for. We encourage all voters to research any and all candidates and to decide for themselves.

To start, our campaign never contacted the administrators of the Arts and Sciences Ambassadors page. We solicited no endorsement from this organization and could not have known about their faulty endorsement, if these posts can even be construed as total endorsements.

As soon as we realized this "endorsement" had been improperly posted, we immediately moved to have it taken down. The provided screenshot was taken a mere 8 minutes after the posting. The provided screenshot shows that the complainant saw the post at 10:59 a.m., meaning the post was made at 10:51 a.m. As you can see in the screenshot below, John was working to have the post taken down as early as 13 minutes after it was posted.





A faster response time would be an unreasonable ask as the post was made without our knowledge. Frankly, having an unknown post removed from an account we do not control within 13 minutes of its posting is a feat.

Our campaign at no point in time solicited an endorsement from this group, nor did we condone an endorsement, as evidenced above. Clearly, any breach of endorsement protocol rests entirely beyond the reach or responsibility of our campaign.

We would also like to point out that there is no violation listed in section XIX of the Elections Manual that corresponds to this infraction. The cited violation (XIV.B) does not carry a coincident violation in the classification list, and does not give any indication of such a breach carrying a penalty for the campaign. There is no point value or classification attributed to this complaint. For this reason, and the articles above, this complaint is not applicable to the situation and has no punitive standing in this case.

Thanks! Let me know if there's anything else I can help with.

Zachary Johnson

*Vice President, Alabama International Relations Club
Undersecretary General of General Assemblies and Special Assemblies, AIRMUNC IV
Class of 2022, Blackburn Institute*

Phone [redacted] | [redacted]



From: sgaelections <sgaelections@ua.edu>
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 4:03 PM
To: John Richardson [redacted]
Cc: sgaelections <sgaelections@ua.edu>; Zach Johnson [redacted]
Subject: Elections Board Notice of Reported Campaign Violation #4

John,

This email is to notify you that an Elections Violation Complaint was received against your campaign. The complaint was filed by Robbie Khalil and the submission alleges a violation of Election Code **XIV.A. Only UA students eligible to vote in an SGA election or groups comprised exclusively of UA students eligible to vote may, with prior approval of the candidate, publicly endorse a candidate and XIV.B. Candidates may be contacted by any University of Alabama registered organization for the purposes of speaking at meetings to seek endorsements. Any public endorsement must include the disclaimer statement below: (Organization name) endorses (candidate name) for (insert position). Our members' votes are**

their own and they have the right to choose whether to vote and whom to vote for. We encourage all voters to research any and all candidates and to decide for themselves.

According to the complaint, “the Arts and Sciences Ambassadors posted a story photo with the caption, ‘We couldn’t be more proud of our Ambassador, John Richardson! Congratulations on your candidacy.’ This is a clear endorsement and did not include the endorsement statement. #risewithrichardson” Additionally, they tagged @risewithrichardson John Richardsons campaign account.”

This email, however, is NOT to notify you that you have received violation points by the Elections Board, but a request for your response to these allegations. Per the [Elections Manual](#), you have twelve (12) hours to reply to the alleged violations for review by the Elections Board.

Should you have additional questions or if we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Student Elections Board

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Student Government Association

[The University of Alabama](#)

sgaelections@ua.edu | <https://sga.sa.ua.edu/elections>