

IN THE STUDENT JUDICIARY  
FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

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No. 23-002

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JORDAN SUTTLES;

CANDIDATE, STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION:

Appellant,

versus

ANSLEY STAMPER;

CHAIRPERSON, ELECTIONS BOARD; ELECTIONS BOARD et al;

Appellee,

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Election Appeal for Judicial Review

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**OPINION**

CHIEF JUSTICE ELECT MORTHLAND delivered the Opinion of the Court, which was joined in full by the Panel of Justices present on the case.

**I**

Let it be known that the Judicial process regarding Elections Appeals differs slightly from those cases seen on a regular basis by the Court regarding other matters. In standard Judicial Appeals, the Court would hear a case between a Complainant and a Defendant. However, Elections Appeals differ slightly in that the Court serves as an appellate body to hear matters that have previously been adjudicated by the Elections Board. The Court's review of information pertaining to No. 23-002 was result of a previously rendered decision of the Elections Board that the Appellant viewed as unfavorable—thereby appealing the matter to the Judiciary.

**II**

The Elections Board, in such ruling, awarded the Appellant nine points for a major election code violation concerning:

**XII. CAMPAIGN ETHICS.**

A. Candidates are expected to conduct themselves in an ethically appropriate manner in accordance with Student Government Association documents and the Code of Student

Conduct. A violation of this Manual may also be a violation of the Code of Student Conduct or other University policy.

These points were awarded for an expressed disregard to ‘adhere to ethical campaign practices and not engage in any behavior that could harm the reputation of The University of Alabama or the SGA,’ via actions of ‘posting derogatory comments on [other candidates’] Instagram account[s] using [an] alias.’ With a major election code violation against the campaign, the Elections Board voted to disqualify the Appellant from the Spring 2023 General Election.

Stipulated facts from the Appellant argue that such actions were taken by their campaign manager, and they were all the while unaware and not responsible.

In response to such argument, the Appellant’s campaign manager submitted a statement detailing the events as follows:

‘On Wednesday, February 22, Jordan Suttles, another friend, and myself opened a burner account with the username “hgfdyhbvbvcxx.” With this account, I, along with the two of them, commented malicious, horrible, and mean comments on [one candidate] and [another candidate]’s campaign[s] and their appearance[s]...’

‘...What I was shocked to see, were comments under the CW’s post about the article by Jordan claiming to know nothing about the situation and stating that this is something “I did of my own free will”...’

‘Jordan then released a statement relieving me of my duties as his campaign manager, claiming to know nothing about the comments.’

The Appellant further argues that Co-Chair of the Elections Board Scott Sonnier acted against the Constitution of the Student Government Association of The University of Alabama in violating Article VIII. Section D.1.B:

‘Should a member of the Student Elections Board have a conflict of interest with the candidate responsible for a violation, i.e., be members of the same organization, etc., that member must recuse themselves from hearings.’

Such violation is claimed as Scott Sonnier was found to be:

‘Actively liking comments on his personal Instagram account that involved hateful comments about [the Appellant] and [their] campaign team on the Crimson White’s public Instagram account.’

### III

After reviewing the submitted arguments of the case, the Court found that the Appellant did not have a preponderance of evidence to indicate that they were not involved in the violating actions. However, the Court also found that the involvement of Co-Chair Scott Sonnier was unconstitutional, given their demonstrated conflict of interest with the case.

It is the advice of the Court that Appeal No. 23-002 be sent back to the Elections Board for a rehearing with the recusal of Co-Chair Sonnier. It is further advised that there be action taken to codify in the Elections Board Manual an article clarifying the responsibility/non responsibility of

candidates for actions of members of their campaign team, including whether their campaign may be held punishable for election code violations of any of their team members. This addition is in the future interest of the integrity and campaign ethics of the elections processes.

### **ORDERS**

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:** That the Elections Board rehear Appeal No. 23-002 with the recusal of Co-Chair Sonnier.

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:** That the Elections Board more clearly outline responsibility of candidates for actions taken by their campaign team members.

It is so ordered,



Abilene Morthland,

Chief Justice Elect, Student Government Association