

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
 COUNTY OF RICHLAND )  
 )  
 IN THE MATTER OF: )  
 COMPLAINT C2013-112 )  
 )  
 State Ethics Commission, )  
 Complainant, )  
 )  
 vs. )  
 )  
 Meg Schulze, )  
 Respondent. )  
 \_\_\_\_\_ )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

STATE ETHICS  
 COMMISSION

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**DECISION AND ORDER**

This matter comes before the State Ethics Commission by virtue of a complaint filed by the Commission on February 22, 2013. On September 18, 2013, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §8-13-320(10)(i)(Supp. 2013), the State Ethics Commission reviewed the above-captioned complaint charging Respondent, Meg Schulze, with violations of Section 8-13-1308 and probable cause was found to warrant an evidentiary hearing.

Present at the Hearing on November 20, 2013 were Commission Members Phillip Florence, Jr., Chair, Jonathan H. Burnett and Richard H. Fitzgerald. Respondent was present and appeared *pro se*. Complainant was represented by Cathy L. Hazelwood, General Counsel. The following charges were considered:

**COUNT ONE  
 FAILURE TO FILE QUARTERLY CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT  
 SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Meg Schulze, a candidate for Greenwood County Probate Judge in a June 8, 2010 election, did in Richland County, fail to timely file a January 10, 2012 quarterly Campaign Disclosure Report within ten days of the end of the calendar quarter, all in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

**COUNT TWO**  
**FAILURE TO FILE QUARTERLY CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Meg Schulze, a candidate for Greenwood County Probate Judge in a June 8, 2010 election, did in Richland County, fail to timely file an April 10, 2012 quarterly Campaign Disclosure Report within ten days of the end of the calendar quarter, all in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

**COUNT THREE**  
**FAILURE TO FILE QUARTERLY CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Meg Schulze, a candidate for Greenwood County Probate Judge in a June 8, 2010 election, did in Richland County, fail to timely file a July 10, 2012 quarterly Campaign Disclosure Report within ten days of the end of the calendar quarter, all in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

**COUNT FOUR**  
**FAILURE TO FILE QUARTERLY CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Meg Schulze, a candidate for Greenwood County Probate Judge in a June 8, 2010 election, did in Richland County, fail to timely file an October 10, 2012 quarterly Campaign Disclosure Report within ten days of the end of the calendar quarter, all in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

**COUNT FIVE**  
**FAILURE TO FILE QUARTERLY CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Meg Schulze, a candidate for Greenwood County Probate Judge in a June 8, 2010 election, did in Richland County, fail to timely file a January 10, 2013 quarterly

Campaign Disclosure Report within ten days of the end of the calendar quarter, all in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

Having carefully reviewed the evidence presented, the Commission finds as fact:

1. The Respondent, Meg Schulze, was a candidate for Greenwood County Probate Judge in a June 8, 2010 election.

2. Kristin Smith, administrative coordinator of the Commission's non-compliance office, testified that by letter dated November 28, 2012, Respondent was penalized \$400.00 for failing to file a January 10, 2012, an April 10, 2012, a July 10, 2012 and an October 10, 2012 Campaign Disclosure form (CD). The letter was re-sent certified on December 28, 2012. The certified letter was returned as unclaimed on January 28, 2013. It was re-mailed first class. Penalties began accruing on February 8, 2013. Respondent filed the required CDs on March 26, 2013, but the \$15,300.00 late-filing penalty was not paid.

3. Commission Investigator Dan Choate testified that on March 26, 2013 he contacted Respondent by telephone. She stated she had been experiencing some health problems; however, she advised she would comply as soon as possible. On March 26, 2013 Respondent filed the required CDs and is now in compliance. The outstanding penalty remains at \$15,300.00.

4. Respondent testified that she has been experiencing pretty major health issues. She is clinically depressed and under the care of a doctor at MUSC. She has a severe anxiety disorder that caused her to take a leave of absence, but she later quit her job as an as-

sistant solicitor due to panic attacks. She broke her ankle and then had to have gall bladder surgery. Respondent testified that she had no ill intent; she was simply overwhelmed by her worsening health.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Based upon the Findings of Fact, the Commission concludes, as a matter of law:

1. During all times relevant, the Respondent, Meg Schulze, was a candidate as defined by Section 8-13-1300(4).

2. The State Ethics Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction

3. Section 8-13-1308(B) provides:

Following the filing of an initial certified campaign report, additional certified campaign reports must be filed within ten days following the end of each calendar quarter in which contributions are received or expenditures are made, whether before or after an election until the campaign account undergoes final disbursement pursuant to the provisions of Section 8-13-1370.

4. Section 8-13-1510(1) provides as follows:

Except as otherwise specifically provided in this chapter, a person required to file a report or statement under this chapter who files a late statement or report or fails to file a required statement or report must be assessed a civil penalty as follows:

(1) a fine of one hundred dollars if not filed within five days after the established deadline provided by law in this chapter;

5. Section 8-13-130 states in part:

The State Ethics Commission may levy an enforcement or administrative fee on a person who is found in violation, or who admits to a violation, of the "Ethics, Government Accountability and Campaign Reform Act of 1991". The fee must be used to reimburse the commission for costs associated with the investigation and hearing of a violation.

### **DECISION**

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the State Ethics Commission has determined based upon a preponderance of evidence that Respondent Meg Schulze is in violation of Section 8-13-1308; and therefore, Respondent Meg Schulze is hereby Publicly Reprimanded and she is hereby assessed a late-filing penalty of \$300.00 to be paid within 60 days of receipt of the order. In addition a \$200.00 administrative fee is assessed and it must be paid within 60 days of receipt of the order. If the reduced late-filing penalty and administrative fee are not timely paid then the amount owed will revert to the original late filing penalty of \$15,300.00.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to Section 8-13-320, a Judgment in the amount of \$15,300.00 is, and shall be entered against Respondent, if she fails to pay the reduced late-filing penalty and administrative fee within the time permitted.

FINALLY, Respondent Meg Schulze has ten (10) days from receipt of this order to appeal this Decision and Order to the full Commission.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 9th DAY OF Dec., 2013.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

  
PHILLIP FLORENCE, JR.  
HEARING CHAIR

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA