

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
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# STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:**  
**CASE NUMBER**  
C 2024-032

## COMPLAINT FORM

**COMPLAINANT:** State Ethics Commission  
**ADDRESS:** 201 Executive Center Drive  
Suite 150  
Columbia, SC 29210

**RESPONDENT:** James F. Norris, III  
**ADDRESS:** [REDACTED]  
**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** [REDACTED]

**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** (803) 253-4192

**TITLE:** Candidate – Hampton County Council

Section 8-13-1308, S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires candidates to file Campaign Disclosures within ten (10) days of receiving or expending \$500; fifteen (15) days prior to each election; within ten (10) days of the end of each quarter; and a final report when the campaign account is closed. In addition, certified campaign reports detailing campaign contributions and expenditures must contain the total of contributions accepted, the name and address of each person making a contribution, the total expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate or committee, and the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made from campaign funds. Pursuant to Section 8-13-1362 and Regulation 52-504 (C), the Pre-Election and quarterly report are required even when there have been no contributions or expenditures. Records of the State Ethics Commission indicate that an Initial Campaign Disclosure was due no later than April 4, 2022 and a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure was due between May 25, 2022 and May 30, 2022.

Section 8-13-1356 (A), SC Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires a candidate, who files a statement of intention of candidacy seeking nomination by a political party primary or political party convention, must electronically file a Statement of Economic Interests for the preceding calendar year prior to the close of filing for the office. Respondent failed to file a 2022 Statement of Economic Interests as a candidate by March 30, 2022.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirements by a certified letter dated February 24, 2023 as described in the attached. To date, a properly completed Initial Campaign Disclosure, Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure, or 2022 Statement of Economic Interests have not been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1356(A), Section 8-13-1308(A), Section 8-13-1308(D)(1), and Section 8-13-1308 (F), S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended.

**If there is a finding of probable cause, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response (if any) by respondent, and the notice of hearing. If a hearing is to be held, the final order and all exhibits become public record. If no hearing is held following a finding of probable cause, the final disposition of the matter becomes public record.**

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF Richland

Personally appeared before me Meghan Walker Dayson who, first being duly sworn, says that she has read and knows the contents of the above complaint and that the allegations contained therein, are true and correct to the best of her own knowledge, except for those matters therein based upon information and belief, and as to those she believes them to be true.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this  
30<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2024

[REDACTED]  
Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director

[REDACTED]  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission expires 01/22/26

SEC-7 (Revised 3/2022)

**REPLY TO:** 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210 (803)253-4192  
**ELECTRONIC COPIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )  
  
IN THE MATTER OF: )  
  
Complaint C2024-032 )  
  
State Ethics Commission )  
Complainant. )  
  
James F. Norris, III )  
Respondent. )  

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BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF HEARING**

The State Ethics Commission has determined that there is probable cause pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, in the above-captioned complaint. The Commission will convene a formal hearing into the matter in accordance with Section 8-13-320(10)(i) & (j), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, and State Ethics Commission Regulations, S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 52-707 (1997 Cum. Supp.) on Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. at the Commission Hearing Room located at: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210.

The following allegations will be heard:

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

That James F. Norris, III, candidate for Hampton County Council, did in Richland County, fail to file an Initial Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR), in violation of Section 8-13-1308(A).

**COUNT TWO**  
**FAILURE TO FILE A PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(D)(1), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That James F. Norris, III, candidate for Hampton County Council, did in Richland County,

fail to file a 2022 Pre-Election CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(D)(1).

**COUNT THREE**  
**FAILURE TO FILE A PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(D)(1), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That James F. Norris, III, candidate for Hampton County Council, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2024 Pre-Election CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(D)(1).

**COUNT FOUR**  
**FAILURE TO FILE A STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS**  
**SECTION 8-13-1356, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That James F. Norris, III, candidate for Hampton County Council, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2022 Statement of Economic Interests (SEI), in violation of Section 8-13-1356.

**COUNT FIVE**  
**FAILURE TO FILE A STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS**  
**SECTION 8-13-1356, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That James F. Norris, III, candidate for Hampton County Council, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2024 SEI, in violation of Section 8-13-1356.

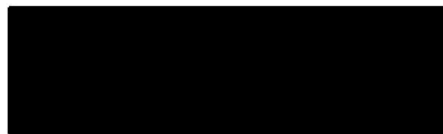
**COUNT SIX**  
**FAILURE TO OPEN A CAMPAIGN BANK ACCOUNT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1312, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That James F. Norris, III, candidate for Hampton County Council, did in Richland County, fail to open a campaign bank account, in violation of Section 8-13-1312.

You have the right to be represented by counsel, the right to call and examine witnesses, the right to introduce exhibits, and the right to cross-examine opposing witnesses. This hearing will be open to the public as required by Section 8-13-320(10)(j), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended. The procedures to be followed are set forth in the Administrative Procedures Act, Section 1-23-10, et seq., Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976 as amended, the State Ethics Act, Section 8-13-100, et seq., Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, and State Ethics

Commission Regulations, S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 52-707 (1997 Cum. Supp.).

A pre-hearing conference may be scheduled prior to the hearing to allow exchange of witness lists and evidence, marking of exhibits, and disposition of motions or pleadings. In the event you fail to appear, judgment by default will be rendered against you. If there are any questions concerning the above notice or hearing times, please contact the State Ethics Commission.



Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director  
State Ethics Commission

Dated this 19<sup>th</sup> day,  
of September 2024.

*Certificate of Service by Certified Mail*

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on the **RESPONDENT** James F. Norris, III, 555 Baker Blvd., NE, Estill, SC 29918 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 23rd day of September 2024, by **CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.



**Rachael O'Bryan, Administrative Assistant**  
State Ethics Commission (803) 253-4192

Columbia, South Carolina

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )  
IN THE MATTER OF: )  
COMPLAINT C2024-032 )  
State Ethics Commission, )  
Complainant, )  
James F. Norris, III, )  
Respondent. )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**CONSENT ORDER**

This matter comes before the State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on May 30, 2024. Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act), the Complaint against James F. Norris, III, (Respondent) was considered by the Commission and probable cause was found to warrant an evidentiary hearing. Prior to the call of the case, Respondent agreed to the following:

**STATEMENTS OF FACT**

1. Respondent was an unsuccessful partisan candidate for Hampton County Council in a June 14, 2022 primary election.
2. On March 25, 2022, Respondent filed his Statement of Intention of Candidacy and Party Pledge to the Hampton County Board of Elections and paid the \$294.56 filing fee by personal check. Respondent did not file an Initial Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) within ten (10) days of paying the filing fee.
3. Respondent thereafter failed to file both a 2022 Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) as a partisan candidate and a Pre-Election CDR for the June 14, 2022 election.
4. In a February 24, 2023 certified letter, the Commission notified Respondent of his failure to timely file a 2022 Initial CDR, a 2022 Pre-Election CDR, and a 2022 SEI.
5. According to the United States Postal Service, the certified letter was delivered to Respondent's address of record on February 27, 2023 at 2:06 p.m.

JX #1

6. On March 9, 2023, late-filing penalties began to accrue at \$30.00 per day (\$10.00 per report).
7. On March 19, 2023, late-filing penalties began to accrue at \$300 per day (\$100.00 per report).
8. From April 16, 2024 to April 24, 2024, Commission staff attempted to assist Respondent with his filings via telephone before making an appointment for April 25, 2024. When Commission staff attempted to contact Respondent on April 25, 2024 for the appointment, the number provided by Respondent was no longer in service.
9. Following the filing of the Complaint, a Commission investigator subpoenaed Respondent's bank account records. The bank records revealed that Respondent did not open a campaign account for his 2022 election cycle for Hampton County Council.
10. The investigation further revealed that on April 5, 2024, Respondent filed a Statement of Intention of Candidacy and Party Pledge to the Hampton County Board of Elections as a partisan candidate for a July 30, 2024 Hampton County Council special election, and paid the \$100.00 filing fee by personal check.
11. Respondent thereafter failed to file both a 2024 SEI as a partisan candidate and a Pre-Election CDR for the July 30, 2024 election.
12. On January 24, 2025, with Commission staff's assistance, Respondent filed his required reports and is now in compliance.

#### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

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

1. At all times relevant, Respondent was a "candidate" pursuant to Section 8-13-1300(4). Therefore, the Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.
2. Section 8-13-1308 provides, in relevant part:
  - (A) Upon receipt or expenditure of campaign contributions or the making of independent expenditures totaling an accumulated aggregate of five hundred dollars or more, a candidate . . . must file an initial certified campaign report within ten days of these

JA #2

initial receipts or expenditures. However, a candidate who does not receive or expend campaign contributions totaling an accumulated aggregate of five hundred dollars or more must file an initial certified campaign report fifteen days before an election.

...

(D)(1) At least fifteen days before an election, a certified campaign report must be filed showing contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures to or by the candidate for the period ending twenty days before the election.

3. Section 8-13-1356(A) provides:

A person who becomes a candidate by filing a statement of intention of candidacy seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year pursuant to Section 8-13-365 prior to the close of filing for the particular office.

4. Section 8-13-1312 provides, in relevant part:

... expenses paid on behalf of a candidate or committee must be drawn from the campaign account and issued on a check signed by the candidate or a duly authorized officer of a committee.

5. Section 8-13-1510(A) provides, in relevant part:

... a person required to file a report or statement under this chapter who files a late statement or report ... must be assessed a civil penalty as follows: (1) a fine of one hundred dollars if the statement or report is not filed within five days after the established deadline provided by law in this chapter; and (2) after notice has been given by certified or registered mail that a required statement or report has not been filed, a fine of ten dollars per calendar day for the first ten days after notice has been given, and one hundred dollars for each additional calendar day in which the required statement or report is not filed, not exceeding five thousand dollars.

6. Section 8-13-130 allows the Commission to “levy an enforcement or administrative fee on a person who is in violation” of the Ethics Act.

7. Section 8-13-320(10)(l) allows the Commission to assess a \$2,000.00 civil penalty for violations of the Section 8-13-1370 of the Ethics Act and permits the Commission to require the forfeiture of any profits obtained in violation thereof.

### DISCUSSION

The Commission found probable cause to charge Respondent with one (1) count of violating

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Section 8-13-1308(A) for failing to timely file a 2022 Initial CDR; two (2) counts of violating Section 8-13-1308(B) for failing to file 2022 and 2024 Pre-Election CDRs; two (2) counts of violating Section 8-13-1356 for failing to file 2022 and 2024 SEIs as a partisan candidate; and one (1) count of violating Section 8-13-1312 for failing to establish a campaign bank account. Through this Consent Order, Respondent admits he violated the Ethics Act as described herein. In mitigation, Respondent states the following:

[M]y circumstances were such that I was really overwhelmed and in hindsight should not have run for office when I did. I just hoped to make a difference and was encouraged by friends to do so. As history has proven, Hampton county has been in difficult circumstances for the past several years. My own situation is that my son was diagnosed with leukemia (chronic) on November of 2019. Since then[,] he has had hip replacement surgery as well as knee replacement. In addition[,] he has had [a] neck fusion and a few other surgeries including gastric sleeve. In December 2020[,] I had an episode of Afib which lead to the discovery of two aneurysms in my aorta right above my heart as well as a bicuspid valve. I had surgery in June 2021 to correct those issues. That fall I developed a chronic lower back issue that I nursed until finally having surgery in June of 2022. This was going on at the time I ran for office[,] and it was all I could do to work and keep things going at home. I did not have time to campaign[,] and it showed. I also did not get out and solicit funds beyond the one donation of \$200 that contributed to my filing fee. I paid the balance of it.

I did run again in a special election last spring[,] but I paid for my signs and filing fee out of my pocket. I did no campaigning beyond my signs. . . I am a teacher, now retired and my son is disabled and has little income. I also now have custody of my mother who is 88 and can no longer live alone. She has been here for two years. We have recently had to replace hvac [*sic*] and pump and well equipment for the house[,] so money is always tight.

Respondent further asserts that his phone was out of service when the Commission attempted to contact him on April 25, 2024 to assist with his filings. Finally, the Commission acknowledges that 2022 was Respondent's first run for office.

#### **DISPOSITION**

1. The Commission hereby finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of 8-13-1308(A), two (2) counts of 8-13-1308(B), two (2) counts of 8-13-1356, and one (1) count of 8-13-1312.
2. The Commission adopts the Statements of Fact, Conclusions of Law, Discussion, and Disposition

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as agreed upon by the Respondent.

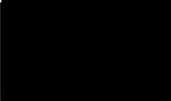
THEREFORE, the Commission hereby issues this Public Reprimand and orders Respondent to pay the Commission, within eighteen (18) months from receipt of this Order, a reduced late-filing penalty of \$500.00 and an administrative fee of \$500.00, for a total of \$1,000.00. Given the mitigation herein, the Commission declines to issue a civil penalty for the violation of Section 8-13-1312. However, in the event Respondent does not make payment as provided for in this Order, the Commission shall then assess a civil penalty of \$2,000.00 for his violation of Section 8-13-1312.

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that he is not only admitting to a violation of the Ethics Act, but also confessing to a judgment of \$3,000.00 in the event of untimely payment as provided above. In that instance, the Commission shall file a Judgment against Respondent with the County Clerk of Court in Respondent's last known County of residence, who shall enter this Order in the amount of \$3,000.00 (less any money paid) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 4<sup>th</sup> DAY OF March 2025.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

  
F. XAVIER STARKES, CHAIR

  
JAMES F. NORRIS, III  
RESPONDENT