

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:

CASE NUMBER

c 2024-101

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: State Ethics Commission
ADDRESS: 201 Executive Center Drive
Suite 150
Columbia, SC 29210
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (803) 253-4192

RESPONDENT: Louis L. Smith
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]
TITLE: Candidate – Dorchester County School
District 2 Trustee

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 an accumulated aggregate of \$500.00 or more; 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 a Campaign Disclosure was due no later than January 10, 2021, April 10, 2021, July 10, 2021, October 10, 2021, January 10, 2022, April 10, 2022, July 10, 2022, October 10, 2022, January 10, 2023, April 10, 2023, July 10, 2023, October 10, 2023, January 10, 2024, April 10, 2024, July 10, 2024, and October 10, 2024. Respondent was sent an email reminder thirty days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline from January 2021 through October 2021 and was sent an email reminder thirty days before and ten days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline after October 2021.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirements by a certified letter dated February 16, 2024 as described in the attached. To date, a properly completed Quarter 4 2020, Quarter 1 2021, Quarter 2 2021, Quarter 3 2021, Quarter 4 2021, Quarter 1 2022, Quarter 2 2022, Quarter 3 2022, Quarter 4 2022, Quarter 1 2023, Quarter 2 2023, Quarter 3 2023, Quarter 4 2023, Quarter 1 2024, Quarter 2 2024, and Quarter 3 2024 Campaign Disclosure have not been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B) 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 Davson 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
19th day of December, 2024

[REDACTED]
Meghan Walker Davson, 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)	BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
)	
IN THE MATTER OF:)	
)	
Complaint C2024-101)	
)	
State Ethics Commission)	NOTICE OF HEARING
Complainant.)	
)	
Louis L. Smith)	
Respondent.)	
_____)	

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 19, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at the Commission Hearing Room located at: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210.

The following allegation will be heard:


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

That Louis Smith, candidate for Dorchester County School District Two School Board, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2020 Quarter 4/Final Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR), in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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 23rd day,
of July 2025.

Certificate of Service by Certified Mail

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on RESPONDENT Louis L. Smith, 100 Clover Street, Summerville, SC 29483 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 25th day of July 2025, by CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.



Rachael O'Bryan, Administrative Assistant

Columbia, South Carolina

State Ethics Commission

(803) 253-4192

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
 COUNTY OF RICHLAND)
)
 IN THE MATTER OF:)
 COMPLAINT C2024-101)
)
 State Ethics Commission,)
 Complainant,)
)
 Louis L. Smith,)
 Respondent.)
 _____)

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

CONSENT ORDER

This matter comes before the State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on December 19, 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 Louis L. Smith (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 candidate for Dorchester County School District 2 Board of Trustees in a November 3, 2020, general election.
2. Prior to the filing of the Complaint, Respondent's most recently filed Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) was a 2020 Pre-Election/Quarter 3 CDR reflecting a positive balance of contributions.
3. Respondent thereafter failed to file any additional CDRs.
4. In a February 16, 2024, certified letter, the Commission notified Respondent of his failure to file any additional CDRs.
5. According to the United States Postal Service (USPS), the certified letter was delivered to Respondent's address of record on February 21, 2024, at 3:45 p.m.

NDT

6. On March 3, 2024, late-filing penalties began to accrue at \$10.00 per day.
7. On March 13, 2024, late-filing penalties began to accrue at \$100.00 per day.
8. On March 19, 2024, Respondent telephoned the Commission and spoke with a staff member about filing his CDRs.
9. On October 4 and October 10, 2024, a Commission staff member spoke with Respondent about filing his CDRs. On both occasions, Respondent's spouse was with him and was purportedly assisting him with filing.
10. The Complaint was filed on December 19, 2024.
11. Following the filing of the Complaint, Respondent's campaign bank account records were subpoenaed. According to these records, Respondent's campaign bank account reached a \$0.00 balance November 12, 2020.
12. On December 16, 2025, Respondent filed a Quarter 4/Final 2020 CDR.

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. Because the campaign bank account closed on November 12, 2020, Respondent was required to file a Quarter 4/Final 2020 CDR on or before January 10, 2021, pursuant to Section 8-13-1308(B), which provides, in relevant part:

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.

NDT

3. In accordance with Section 8-13-1510(A), Respondent has accrued \$5,000.00 in late-filing penalties because he received certified notice of his failure to file on February 21, 2024, but did not file until December 16, 2025:

. . . 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.

4. 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.

DISCUSSION

The Commission found probable cause to charge Respondent with one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(B) for failing to file a Quarter 4/Final 2020 CDR. Through this Consent Order, Respondent acknowledges he violated the Ethics Act as identified above. In mitigation, Respondent states that the individual who originally managed his campaign finances died before the campaign bank account could be closed and that he was unaware that there were additional CDRs required. Respondent further states, and the campaign bank account records confirm, that Respondent’s campaign was predominately self-funded and that the balance in the campaign bank account during the Commission’s four-year statute of limitations was approximately \$60.00. Respondent accepts responsibility for his actions and states that it was not his intent to withhold information from the public or the Commission.

NDT

DISPOSITION

1. The Commission finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(B).
2. The Commission adopts the Statements of Fact, Conclusions of Law, Discussion, and Disposition as agreed upon by the Respondent.

THEREFORE, the Commission hereby issues this Written Warning and orders Respondent to pay the Commission, within one (1) year from receipt of this Order, a reduced late-filing penalty of \$200.00 and an administrative fee of \$400.00, for a total of \$600.00.

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that he is consenting to a judgment of \$600.00 if he does not make payment as provided for in this Order, in which case 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 \$600.00 (less any money paid) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 19th DAY OF MARCH 2026.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



LOUIS L. SMITH
RESPONDENT