

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:
CASE NUMBER
C 2025-079

COMPLAINT FORM

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

RESPONDENT: Thomas E. Bishop
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (864) 426-2981
TITLE: Southside Fire District Commissioner

Section 8-13-1110, SC Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires certain officials to file a Statement of Economic Interests prior to assuming the duties of the office, and Section 8-13-1140, SC Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires the filing of an updated Statement of Economic Interests for the previous calendar year annually thereafter prior to March 30. Records in the State Ethics Commission indicate that the Respondent was required to file the 2023 Statement of Economic Interests in January 2023, the 2024 Statement of Economic Interests by March 30, 2024, and the 2025 Statement of Economic Interests by March 30, 2025.

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 Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure was due between October 19, 2022 and October 24, 2022.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirements by a certified letter dated September 27, 2024 as described in the attached. In addition, an email reminder was sent thirty days prior to the deadline. To date, a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure, 2023, 2024, and 2025 Statement of Economic Interests have not been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1120, Section 8-13-1140, Section 8-13-1308(A), Section 8-13-1308(D)(1), and Section 8-13-1308(F), SC 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 27th day of AUGUST, 2025

[REDACTED]
Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director

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

SEC-7 (Revised 3/2022)

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
 COUNTY OF RICHLAND) BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
)
 IN THE MATTER OF:)
 COMPLAINT C2025-079)
)
 State Ethics Commission,) **DECISION AND ORDER**
 Complainant.)
)
 Thomas E. Bishop,)
 Respondent.)
 _____)

This matter came before the South Carolina Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on August 27, 2025. The Commission’s Executive Director reviewed the Complaint, determined it contained facts sufficient to warrant an investigation, and ordered an investigation. On November 20, 2025, the Commission reviewed the Complaint and investigative findings to determine whether probable cause existed to charge Thomas E. Bishop (Respondent) with violating the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act). For the reasons stated herein, the Commission finds probable cause exists but waives further proceedings.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

1. Respondent was a successful candidate for the Southside Fire District Commission in a November 8, 2022 election.
2. Respondent did not file a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) prior to the November 8, 2022 election.
3. Respondent did not file a 2023 Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) prior to taking oath of office in January of 2023.
4. Respondent did not file a 2024 SEI by March 30, 2024.
5. In a September 27, 2024, certified letter, the Commission notified Respondent of his failure to

JLH #1

timely file a 2022 Pre-Election CDR, a 2023 SEI, and a 2024 SEI.

6. According to the United States Postal Service (USPS), the Commission's certified letter was delivered to Respondent's address of record on October 4, 2024 at 12:13 p.m. However, Respondent's name does not appear on the USPS return receipt.
7. On October 5, 2024, Respondent filed a 2022 SEI, but did not file any additional reports.
8. Respondent did not file a 2025 SEI by March 30, 2025.
9. The Complaint was filed on August 27, 2025.
10. On September 10, 2025, a Commission Investigator contacted Respondent and advised him of the Complaint. The Investigator further advised Respondent of his failure to file the aforementioned reports. Respondent stated he had recently suffered a stroke, which left him largely unable to read and recognize words.
11. On September 12, 2025, Respondent filed a 2022 Pre-Election CDR, a 2023 SEI, a 2024 SEI, and a 2025 SEI with the assistance of Commission staff. Respondent's 2022 Pre-Election CDR revealed he did not raise or spend any money during his 2022 election cycle.

LAW

Pursuant to Section 8-13-320, the Commission is empowered to receive complaints and conduct investigations related to violations of the Ethics Act. Following the receipt of a Complaint and completion of a corresponding investigation, the Commission must determine whether there is probable cause to believe a violation of the Ethics Act occurred. S.C. Code Ann. § 8-13-320(10)(i). If the Commission determines probable cause exists, it may order a hearing on the merits or, if the Respondent has acted to remedy or correct the alleged violation, it may waive further proceedings. S.C. Code Ann. § 8-13-320(10)(i). The decision to waive further proceedings lies within the sound discretion of the Commission.

JTB #2

The Ethics Act imposes several filing requirements on public officials and candidates for public office. Section 8-13-1308(A) requires candidates who do not raise or spend an accumulated aggregate of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) to file a Pre-Election CDR fifteen (15) days before an election. Section 8-13-1110 requires public officials to file a SEI prior to taking their oath of office. Section 8-13-1140 requires public officials to file a SEI on or before March 30 of each year.

DECISION

Based on the evidence presented, the Commission hereby determines there is probable cause to believe that Respondent (1) violated Section 8-13-1308(A) by failing to file a 2022 Pre-Election CDR fifteen (15) days prior to his November 8, 2022 election, (2) violated Section 8-13-1110 by failing to file a 2023 SEI prior to taking oath of office, and (3) violated Section 8-13-1140 by failing to file 2024 and 2025 SEIs by March 30 of each year. However, given that Respondent has corrected these errors, and in light of the mitigating facts listed herein, the Commission hereby waives further proceedings with regard to this Complaint.

THEREFORE, pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i), and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, the Commission hereby waives further proceedings.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 11th DAY OF December, 2025.

SOUTH CAROLINA ETHICS COMMISSION



F. XAVIER STARKES, CHAIR

Columbia, South Carolina