

Supreme Court of the Student Government
Association

Louisiana Tech University

Ruling: 20-21:2

Argued March 11, 2021 – Decided March 11, 2021

On Petition from the SGA Executive.

Background

On March 4, 2021, Mr. Nathan Jagot from the Department of Elections of the Student Government Association, formally petitioned the Court for clarification on a question about third-party contributions to Vice President candidates' campaigns. The candidate in question wished to use donations from Campus Leadership Project and expressed that, in the event they were elected, they would serve as an ambassador of sorts to the organization.

Ruled: After deliberation, the Supreme Court ruled that the candidate in question could not accept contributions from Campus Leadership Project for reason twofold: it would, one, circumvent Article IV of the Student Government Association's Constitution, and two, make the candidate ineligible to serve as President, which is a requirement for Vice Presidency. The Court does not rule on any future questions on this matter, only on the accepting of campaign contributions from this specific organization.

Wells, V., delivered the Opinion of the Court, in which all other members joined. Jacobs, J., presided over all Court proceedings.

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JUSTICE WELLS delivered the Opinion of the Court.

The Constitution of the Student Government Association of Louisiana Tech lays out the conduct for candidates in elections under Article IV. Any reference to campaigns or campaigning is done so under the definition given in Art. IV, §6.5. On the first question, it is the Opinion of the Court that allowing candidates to accept *carte blanche* contributions, or “donations,” from outside sources would be in violation of Art. IV, §6.7:A, which states, “Total expenditures of any candidate for the Executive Branch shall not exceed \$500.” §6.7:C also requires that receipts and expenditure statements must be submitted to the SGA. The Constitution does not differentiate between personal expenditures from candidates’ own personal finances and outside sources, just that “total expenditures” for all campaign-related goods and services be within a \$500 budget. §6.7:A was designed to provide equal opportunity to all candidates, regardless of socioeconomic status or networking connections. Failing to regulate expenses is a failure to protect all students’ right to fair and equal consideration for the position they are campaigning for. Assuming that donations made from Campus Leadership Project, henceforth known as CLP, were in an amount not exceeding \$500, even an itemized expense report with original receipts submitted to the SGA in the manner prescribed by §6.7:C would not be sufficient insurance that everything was accounted for. Due to the fact that CLP is an off-campus organization with no affiliated chapter on Louisiana Tech’s campus, the risk of potential falsification or underreporting of expenses with no way to verify must be taken into account of the Court’s decision. Addressing the second question, the eligibility of the candidate would most definitely be called into question

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should they accept contributions from CLP. The Duties of the Student Body Vice President as outlined in Art. II, §5.B, C specifically requires him or her to be eligible for the Presidency as well. Both the Vice President and President of the SGA are titled as “Student Body (Vice) President,” underscoring the responsibility to represent the whole of the student body at Louisiana Tech. Art. II, §4.D explicitly states that the President shall represent “the students and Louisiana Tech as a whole.” When the Elections Committee put this matter before the Court, it was understood that should the candidate accept CLP contributions, they would serve as an “ambassador” for the organization. The Vice President of the SGA must first and foremost be the Vice President. There can be no *quid pro quo* loyalties or obligations in the way of executing the duties assigned by Art. II, §5. Given the highly political nature of CLP, the Court cannot in good faith recommend that a *de facto* ex-officio for a partisan organization not present on this university’s campus be eligible to be Vice President. Additionally, as a political organization, if the Vice President is acting as an “ambassador,” they cannot be representative of the student body “as a whole.” Regardless of which partisan affiliation this organization ascribes to, a purely political, off-campus organization cannot have undue influence over the Student Government Association of Louisiana Tech University, which promises to represent the interests of all students.

The Court does not intend for this ruling to be used as an undiscerning precedent to deny all future third-party campaign contributions and donations. Rather, this ruling is to answer the question specifically about contributions from Campus Leadership Project.

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John Jacobs

Ally Peters

Chief Justice

Associate Justice

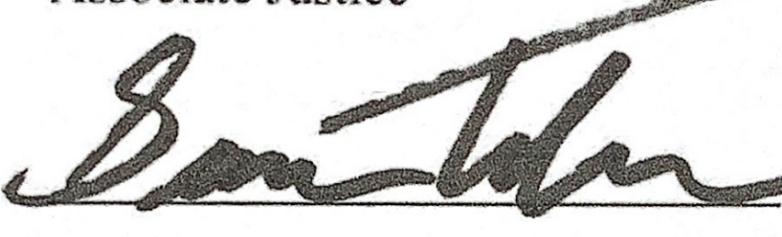
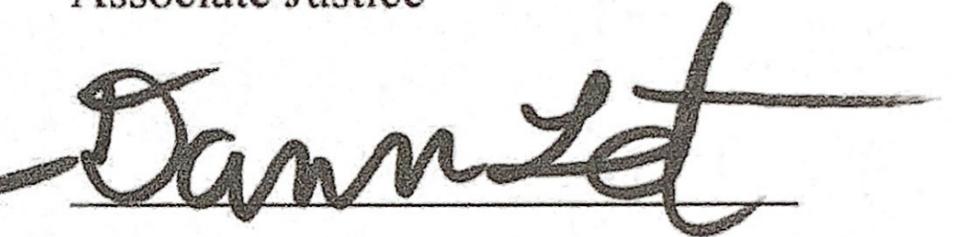
 

Gage McClinton

Dalton Tackett

Associate Justice

Associate Justice

Sean Tilmon

Dann Lat

Associate Justice

Associate Justice

Victoria Wells

Gwyneth Edwards

Associate Justice

Associate Justice



Keaton Holley

Associate Justice