

No. 366-02116-2018

Jeffory G. Snowden,	§	IN THE DISTRICT COURT
<i>Plaintiff</i>	§	
v.	§	
	§	____ JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Brian Ravkind, Tracy Edmondson Gamble	§	
d.b.a. Frisco Strong, and Megan DeWolfe	§	
<i>Defendants.</i>	§	COLLIN COUNTY, TEXAS

**PLAINTIFF'S ORIGINAL PETITION
AND REQUEST FOR DISCLOSURE**

COMES NOW, plaintiff Jeffory G. Snowden to file this petition against Brian Ravkind, Tracy Edmondson Gamble (d.b.a. Frisco Strong), and Megan DeWolfe (“Defendants”) for Election Code violations involving failure to report real names of contributors and hidden donations.

I. DISCOVERY-CONTROL PLAN

1. The plaintiff intends to conduct discovery under Level 2 of Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

II. PARTIES

2. Plaintiff Jeffory G. Snowden is a resident of Frisco.

3. Defendant Brian Ravkind may be served at 3901 Marina Shores Court, Arlington, Texas 76016.

4. Defendant Tracy Edmondson Gamble d.b.a. Frisco Strong may be served at her residence located at 9504 Thorncliff Drive, Frisco, Texas 75034.

5. Defendant Megan DeWolfe served as treasurer of Frisco Parents & Teachers PAC (“FPTP”) and Yes to Frisco Teachers PAC (“YTFT”) and can be served at her

home, 7320 Hickory St. Frisco, TX 76034. DeWolfe's father, Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr. serves as the notary of both organizations.

III. JURISDICTION and VENUE

6. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this suit because the plaintiff seeks relief within the Court's jurisdictional limits.

7. Venue is proper in this Court because a substantial part of the events giving rise to this dispute occurred in Collin County.

8. The plaintiff seeks monetary relief over \$100,000 but not more than \$200,000.

IV. FACTS

A. General Background

9. On August 27, 2016, Yes to Frisco Teachers PAC ("YTFT") was formed by its treasurer Megan DeWolfe, to support the 2016 tax ratification election during which some voters in the Frisco ISD sought to raise taxes beyond 8%. The measure was defeated by Frisco voters in August 2016.

10. YTFT submitted its final report in August 2016 and stating therein that it had no money and owed \$834.95 to Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr., father of the PAC's treasurer, Megan DeWolfe. The report was notarized by Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr.

11. Frisco Parents and Teachers PAC ("FPTP") was formed in 2017 by its treasurer, Megan DeWolfe, as a specific-purpose PAC to support Anne McCausland

and Debbie Gillespie, Frisco ISD Board of Trustee incumbents who sought reelection in the May 2017 municipal elections.

12. Plaintiff Jeffory G. Snowden is a resident of Frisco, Texas and filed to run against incumbent Anne McAusland for Place 4 of Frisco Independent School District's Board of Trustees on February 13, 2017. Snowden, a consulting economist and veteran of twelve years of service on various boards in Frisco, proposed a tax swap neutral to the taxpayer burden to address FISD's finances, and had opposed the failed 2016 tax ratification election.

13. Two days after the FISD election on May 8, 2017, Tracy Edmondson Gamble, while using her assumed name Frisco Strong as though it is a political action committee, and without any written disclosure that the contribution is actually just a contribution from Gamble, contributed \$8,500 to FPTP, according to a FPTP Campaign Finance report submitted by FPTP Megan DeWolfe and notarized by DeWolfe's father, Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr.

14. On May 25, 2017, FPTP submitted a campaign finance report notarized by Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr. that reported an \$8,500 donation from Frisco Strong, the assumed name for Gamble.

B. Brian Raykind and Frisco Citizens for Campaign Integrity ("FCCI")

15. FCCI was formed by an unknown group and initiated a series of social media posts disparaging challengers to FISD incumbents in April 2017.

16. On about April 27, 2017, FCCI engaged Valentine Direct Marketing¹ to conduct a mass mailing.

17. In April of 2017, FCCI established a Facebook page and released a false press release alleging that, based on recent events involving Frisco teens, FCCI performed an investigation and learned that Plaintiff had been arrested, plead guilty, and served 90 days in jail for serving alcohol to minors. The Facebook page was removed one day after the election.

18. On April 27, 2017, FCCI engaged Valentine Direct Marketing to mail flyers at a cost of at least \$8,919.26 with this same false misinformation attacking Snowden. In addition, a fabricated inmate number was assigned to Snowden and also included in the flyer.

19. On May 6, 2017, Snowden lost the FISD election to McAusland.

20. On June 14, 2017, Snowden filed a Rule 202 petition to depose Valentine Marketing and compel the U.S. Postmaster to identify the owner of Frisco P.O. Box 241, which was used as the address of origin for flyers mailed by FCCI and also the address to receive invoices for mass mailing performed by Valentine Marketing.

21. On July 21 2017, the United States Postal Service identified Helen McSpedden and Thomas McSpedden as the registrants for United States Postal Service P.O. Box 241 in Frisco. Public records show Helen McSpedden passed away on April 27, 2010; Thomas McSpedden passed on April 14, 2017, a mere thirteen days before the use of his P.O. Box in a political campaign by FCCI.

¹ Ed Valentine performs various election services under a number of names, including Valentine Marketing Group, Valentine Direct Marketing, and Booker Industries.

22. An examination of the McSpedden obituaries revealed that their son-in law is Cyril William “Buddy” Minett, Jr and that their granddaughter is Megan DeWolfe.

23. Two months after the election on July 10, 2017 and in violation of numerous Texas election codes which are detailed in this petition, FCCI filed an appointment of treasurer, finance report, and dissolution documents with Fisd, stating that FCCI was a specific-purpose PAC formed to oppose Jeff Snowden and Bryan Powell. These documents also claim that Brian Ravkind was sole contributor to FCCI.

24. Brian Ravkind is about 26 years old and lives in Arlington, Texas. He has no known ties with Frisco, other than this specific election. He is listed on LinkedIn as the owner/president of Ravkorp Consulting, which he calls “the Mike Tyson of grassroots consulting groups”.

25. On July 28, 2017, during his deposition, Ed Valentine identified Cyril William “Buddy” Minett, Jr. as the only substantive decision-maker and agent for FCCI with whom Valentine spoke and Ravkind as the only contact for invoicing.

26. On September 5, 2017, Snowden sued Minett for defamation, an ongoing case in which Minett has unsuccessfully filed an anti-SLAPP motion to dismiss and has appealed. The appeal is ongoing.

27. On October 6, 2017, Snowden filed a sworn complaint against Brian Ravkind and FCCI with the Texas Ethics Commission (“TEC”), alleging that Ravkind did not contribute his own money to FCCI, on that allegation on the specifics of this case as detailed herein, as it would be very unusual for a 26-year-old non-resident of Frisco with no substantive financial resources to donate \$8,919.26 to a political campaign

in which he has no tie, other than his work on that campaign. The simplest explanation is that he funneled funds from a third party.

28. On October 13, 2017, the TEC initiated an investigation of alleged violations by FCCI based on Ravkind's very unusual gift of nearly \$9,000 to a political campaign. Specific elements of the investigation include FCCI's lack of a treasurer, unauthorized contributions, and unauthorized expenditures (TEX. ELECTION CODE §§ 252.001, 253.001, 253.003, 253.004, 253.005, 253.031, and 254.031; Ethics Commission Rules §§ 20.58).

C. Frisco Parents & Teachers PAC and Yes 2 Frisco Teachers (Megan DeWolfe)

29. Two days after the FISD election on May 8, 2017, Tracy Edmondson Gamble, while using her assumed name Frisco Strong, contributed \$8,500 to Frisco Parents and Teachers PAC ("FPTP"), the treasurer of which is Megan DeWolfe, daughter of Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr., who notarized its financial report containing that information.

30. An examination of Collin County records revealed that Frisco Strong is actually an assumed name for Tracy Edmondson Gamble, per filings dated December 22, 2014, who should have been listed as the contributor on the finance report.

31. On May 10, 2017, Yes to Frisco Teachers contributed \$1,387.99 to the Frisco Parents and Teachers PAC. Megan DeWolfe is Treasurer of both PACs, and is the daughter of Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr., who notarized the campaign reports.

32. On May 25, 2017, Frisco Parents and Teachers PAC reported a payment of an unreported amount to Booker Industries (a.k.a. Ed Valentine) for printing expense.

33. Noting that a) YTFT's August 2016 report stated it had no money and even owed \$834.95 to the treasurer's father, and b) YTFT made a \$1,387.99 contribution to the FFTP on May 10, 2017, clearly YTFT received unreported campaign funds between August 2016 and May 10, 2017. Megan DeWolfe is treasurer of both PACs, and is the daughter of Cyril William "Buddy" Minett, Jr., who notarized the campaign reports.

34. Y2FT failed to file its semi-annual report in 2017.

35. Y2FT has not filed a final report.

36. Frisco Strong contributed to FFTP \$8,500 though its treasurer knew that the contribution was improperly documented.

37. As stated above, Y2FT is a specific-purpose political action committee, the purpose of which was to support a 2016 ballot measure. The same PAC then resurfaced a year later and expended unidentified funds to support incumbents.

38. On October 3, 2017, Snowden filed a sworn complaint with TEC against DeWolfe and the two specific-purpose action committees for which she serves as treasurer - Frisco Parents & Teachers PAC ("FFTP") and Yes to Frisco Teachers ("Y2FT").

39. On October 13, 2017, the TEC initiated an investigation of alleged violations by DeWolfe, FFTP, and Y2FT. Specific elements of the investigation include failure to disclose on a campaign finance report a political expenditure, failure to file January and July 2017 semiannual reports, failure to file 30-day and 8-day pre-

election reports, and failure to disclose political contributions and total political contributions maintained (TEX. ELEC. CODE §§ 254.031 and 254.123-24).

D. Tracy Edmonson Gamble d.b.a. Frisco Strong

40. The City of Frisco owns a commercial building located between 3rd and 4th Streets on the north side of Main Street in Frisco, operating the Municipal Court of the City of Frisco using the address 6865 Main Street.

41. Much of this building has been leased from the City of Frisco to Musicmaker Frisco LLC since 2012 (“Lease”).² The Lease prohibits subletting without prior written consent of the City of Frisco. The Lease also specifically defines permitted uses, which includes music lessons, musical equipment sales, musical performances, special events, receptions, parties, and food and beverage sales, and no other use.³

42. In 2014 to mid-2017, Gamble operated at least three entities at 6827 Main Street under a verbal sublease of space in violation of the underlying lease agreement between the City of Frisco and Musicmaker Frisco LLC. These entities are Gamble Media, North Texas Public Strategies, and Frisco Strong.

43. Campaign finance records reveal that Gamble was compensated for political consulting by current City of Frisco elected officials while operating out of City of Frisco owned property without a valid lease agreement.⁴

² The Lease agreement is dated December 4, 2012, and applicable to 6827 Main Street between the City of Frisco as landlord, Musicmaker Frisco LLC as tenant, Nichols Land Company as principal broker, and Buddy Minett, Jr. as agent.

³ The Lease lists permitted uses at para. 1.09 and disallows all other uses at para. 6.01.

⁴ See Campaign Finance reports dated January 7, 2014, July 8, 2015, and January 17, 2017 submitted by Will Sowell, Frisco City Council Place 3.

44. Shortly after the May 2017 election, Gamble moved Frisco Strong, North Texas Public Strategies, and Gamble Media to her home.

45. Around May 25, 2017 FPTP submitted a required campaign report signed by DeWolfe and notarized by her father, Cyril William “Buddy” Minett, Jr., which reported \$9,887.99 in contributions and included \$8,500 from Frisco Strong. An examination of Collin County records revealed that Frisco Strong is actually an assumed name for Tracy Edmonson Gamble, who should have been listed as the contributor on the finance report.⁵

46. During the events here described, Gamble acted as though Frisco Strong was a political action committee, but had no registered campaign treasurer.

47. Snowden filed a sworn complaint with TEC against Frisco Strong and Gamble on October 2, 2017.

48. On October 13, 2017, the TEC initiated an investigation of Gamble d.b.a. Frisco Strong regarding allegations that she accepted and made political contributions in a building owned by a municipality where a judge conducts proceedings, violating Section 253.039 of the Texas Election Code.

49. In addition, the TEC is investigating how a purported non-profit community foundation called Frisco Strong, with no record with the IRS, no EIN, operating as an assumed name for Gamble, made an \$8,500 contribution to Frisco Parents and Teachers PAC on May 8, 2017, as reported on Frisco Parents and Teachers PAC campaign finance report dated May 25, 2017.

⁵ See Assumed Name Certificate dated December 22, 2014, Collin County, Texas.

V. APPLICABLE LAW

50. Texas campaign finance rules for political action committees may be enforced by private suits, the state, and the Texas Ethics Commission. Relevant to this suit are private rights of action supported by Sections 253.131 and 254.231.

A. Liability to Candidates (TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.131)

(a) A person who knowingly makes or accepts a campaign contribution or makes a campaign expenditure in violation of this chapter is liable for damages as provided by this section.

(b) If the contribution or expenditure is in support of a candidate, each opposing candidate whose name appears on the ballot is entitled to recover damages under this section.

(c) If the contribution or expenditure is in opposition to a candidate, the candidate is entitled to recover damages under this section.

(d) In this section, “damages” means:

(1) twice the value of the unlawful contribution or expenditure; and

(2) reasonable attorney's fees incurred in the suit.

(e) Reasonable attorney's fees incurred in the suit may be awarded to the defendant if judgment is rendered in the defendant's favor.

B. Contribution to Political Committees (TEX. ELEC. CODE § 254.231)

(a) A candidate or campaign treasurer or assistant campaign treasurer of a political committee who fails to report in whole or in part a campaign contribution or campaign expenditure as required by this chapter is liable for damages as provided by this section.

(b) Each opposing candidate whose name appears on the ballot is entitled to recover damages under this section.

(c) In this section, “damages” means:

(1) twice the amount not reported of the unlawful contribution or expenditure; and

(2) reasonable attorney's fees incurred in the suit.

(d) Reasonable attorney's fees incurred in the suit may be awarded to the defendant if judgment is rendered in the defendant's favor.

VI. CLAIMS

A. Count 1 – Election Code Violations by Brian Ravkind and FCCI

51. Frisco Citizens for Campaign Integrity (“FCCI”) conducted a smear campaign defaming Jeffery Snowden in April 2017, and did not name its treasurer or file any supporting documentation beforehand.

52. On April 10, 2017, FCCI contracted with Valentine Marketing Group for a series of mailings attacking Snowden to benefit McAusland at a value of \$8,919.00; other mailings occurred which may not yet be recognized but will be revealed during discovery and impact damages sought.

53. Two months after the election on July 10, 2017, FCCI filed an appointment of treasurer, finance report, and dissolution documents with FISC, stating that FCCI was a specific committee formed to oppose Jeff Snowden and Bryan Powell. These documents also claim that Brian Ravkind was sole contributor to FCCI.

54. Ravkind’s actions violated Texas Election Code restrictions, including:

- a) Making expenditures in another’s name without disclosing in writing the proper name of the contributor so the contribution can be properly reported by the recipient on finance reports. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.001(a).
- b) Knowingly making a political contribution in violation of Chapter 253 of the Texas Election Code. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.003.
- c) Making political contributions totaling more than \$500 or more without appointing a campaign treasurer. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.031(b).

55. As Ravkind violated Chapters 253 and 254 of the Texas Elections Code, he is

liable under Section 253.132 to the plaintiff in the amount of twice the value of unlawful contributions for each election code violation to each candidate, as well as reasonable attorney fees. At this filing, the known unlawful contributions are at least \$8,919, though additional unlawful contributions may be revealed during discovery, for at least \$19,838 in damages.

B. Count 2 – Election Code Violations by Megan DeWolfe

56. As incorporated from above, Megan DeWolfe served as treasurer of Frisco Parents & Teachers PAC (“FPTP”) and Yes to Frisco Teachers PAC (“YTFT”).

57. DeWolfe’s actions violated Texas Election Code restrictions, including:

- a) On her May 25, 2017 report for FPTP, DeWolfe reported that Booker Industries was providing printing expenses, but failed to list the amount of the expense. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 254.031(a)(3).
- b) As YTFT’s August 2016 report stated it had no money and even owed \$834.95 to its treasurer’s father, but then turned around and contributed \$1,387.99 to the FPTP on May 10, 2017. Clearly YTFT received unreported campaign funds. As treasurer of YTFT, Megan DeWolfe was aware that a contribution to YTFT was not reported properly. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 254.034. (Alternatively, the expenditure exceeded \$500 without sourcing, and is thus also illegal under TEX. ELEC. CODE § 254.183.)
- c) Making expenditures in another’s name without disclosing in writing the proper name of the contributor so the contribution can be properly reported by the recipient on finance reports. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.001(a).

- d) Knowingly making a political contribution in violation of Chapter 253 of the Texas Election Code. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.003.
- e) Making political contributions totaling more than \$500 or more without appointing a campaign treasurer. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.031(b).

58. As DeWolfe violated Chapter 254 of the Texas Elections Code, she is liable under Section 254.231 to Plaintiff in the amount of twice the unlawful contributions received and the expenditures made in connection with these events for each election code violation, and reasonable attorney fees, including but not limited to:

- a) The \$1,387.99 expenditure by Y2FT;
- b) The unreported amount paid to Booker Industries for printing;
- c) The \$8,500 received from Frisco Strong that DeWolfe knew was unlawful.

C. Count 3 – Election Code Violations by Gamble.

59. As stated *supra*, Snowden ran against incumbent Anne McAusland for Place 4 on Frisco Independent School District during the May 2017 school board elections.

60. Tracy Edmondson Gamble, d.b.a. Frisco Strong, contributed \$8,500 to FFTP, a specific-purpose PAC formed to support Anne McCausland and Debbie Gillespie, during the May 2017 school board elections.

61. Jeffery G. Snowden appeared on the same ballot as Anne McCausland.

62. Gamble, d.b.a. Frisco Strong, made this contribution and conducted other political work while operating in a building owned by the City of Frisco and in which the Frisco Municipal Court conducts court proceedings.

63. The Texas Election Code at section § 253.039 prohibits individuals from making or authorizing political contributions on behalf of a candidate, office holder, and political committee while in a courthouse. In that law, “courthouse” is defined to mean “any building owned by the state, a county, or a municipality, or an office or part of a building leased to the state, a county, or a municipality, in which a justice or judge sits to conduct court proceedings.” TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.039(h).

64. During the events here described, Gamble operated Frisco Strong was a political action committee, but had no registered campaign.

65. Gamble’s actions violated Texas Election Code restrictions, including:

- a) Making expenditures in another’s name without disclosing in writing the proper name of the contributor so the contribution can be properly reported by the recipient on finance reports. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.001.
- b) Knowingly making a political contribution in violation of Chapter 253 of the Texas Election Code. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.003.
- c) Making political contributions totaling more than \$500 or more without appointing a campaign treasurer. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.031(b).
- d) Making political contributions in a municipality-owned building in which a judge sits to conduct court proceedings. TEX. ELEC. CODE § 253.039.

66. As Gamble violated the Chapter 253 of the Texas Elections Code, she is liable under Section 253.132 to the plaintiff in the amount of twice the unlawful contribution amount, currently documented at \$8,500 but believed to be proven greater upon discovery for each candidate, and reasonable attorney fees.

D. CONDITIONS PRECEDENT

67. All conditions precedent to the plaintiff's claims for relief have occurred.

E. REQUEST FOR DISCLOSURE

68. The plaintiff requests that the defendants disclose within fifty days of service of this request, the information described in rule 194.2.

F. PRAYER

69. For these reasons, the plaintiff asks that the defendants be cited to appear and answer, and, on final trial or at preliminary hearing, that the plaintiff be awarded a judgment against defendants for the following amounts, which may be increased to reflect discovery effort during prosecution of this case:

- a) From Ravkind – twice the sum of \$8,919 improperly disclosed;
- b) From Gamble – twice the \$8,500 donated from Gamble to FFTP;
- c) From DeWolfe – Twice the donation that took the YTFT from -\$834.95 to +\$1,387.99, plus twice the unknown amount paid to Booker Industries for printing, and twice the \$8,500 illegal donation;
- d) Reasonable and necessary attorney fees; and
- e) Such other and further relief to which Plaintiff may be justly entitled.

Respectfully Submitted,

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