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GoFundMe, Inc.
Attn: Legal Department
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Redwood City, CA 94063

August 21, 2019

It has come to our attention that Juli Briskman, a candidate standing for election to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, Algonkian District, may have failed to qualify for the ballot, and may have violated the Commonwealth's ethics and campaign finance laws, as follows:

- Juli Briskman may have failed to qualify for the ballot when she filed a previous version of the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council Local Statement of Economic Interest.
- Juli Briskman may have filed a materially inaccurate Statement of Economic Interest.
- Juli Briskman may have converted donations made to her personally (through the online platform GoFundMe) into campaign contributions in violation of the terms of use of the GoFundMe platform.
- Juli Briskman may have accepted anonymous campaign contributions.

Given the severity of these potential violations, we respectfully request that investigations be opened immediately by the proper authorities.

I. Background

After Juli Briskman was fired from her job, one of her friends set up a GoFundMe page to raise money for her while she looked for a new job.¹

¹ Jennifer Bendery, "Juli Briskman Has At Least 5,523 Reasons To Be Thankful This Year," *Huffington Post*, Nov. 22, 2017

GoFundMe is a crowdfunding platform that allows individuals, groups, and organizations to raise money for themselves, other people, or causes.² To use the platform, the user first creates an account. There is no cost to create an account. To raise money, the registered user creates a “Campaign,” names the campaign, sets a fundraising goal, and decides who will be the beneficiary of the campaign (i.e. the user herself, another person, or a charity). Then the “Campaign Organizer” designs a GoFundMe page for the campaign, featuring narrative and images. Finally, the Campaign Organizer shares the Campaign via channels such as social media and email.

People who wish to donate to a Campaign make the donation via the GoFundMe platform. The name of the donor, the amount of the donation, and approximate date of the donation are shown on the Campaign page. The funds are collected by GoFundMe, where they are effectively “stored” until they are collected by the intended recipient; however, the website does not reflect if/when the funds are actually collected by the recipient.

To raise money for someone other than herself, the Campaign Organizer must identify a “Beneficiary” (the person authorized to collect any donations received by the Campaign) and invite the Beneficiary to accept. Once a Beneficiary has accepted the invitation, they alone are entitled to the donations, and must provide certain information to the platform in order to withdraw funds (bank account details, a physical address, a phone number, a SSN, and a government issued identification).

According to the GoFundMe terms & conditions, “You, as a Campaign Organizer, represent, warrant, and covenant that (i) all information you provide in connection with a Campaign is accurate, complete, and not likely to deceive reasonable Users; (ii) all Donations contributed to your Campaign will be used solely as described in the materials that you post or otherwise provide.”

The “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page, www.gofundme.com/thank-you-juli-briskman, was created on November 6, 2017, by Rob Mello (“on behalf of Juli Briskman”). According to the page, “I have connected with Juli and she has been officially setup as the beneficiary on this GoFundMe campaign. All proceeds are being donated directly to Juli!”

On its face, the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page was established to raise funds to support Juli Briskman after she was terminated from her job after a photo of her giving the middle finger to President Donald Trump’s motorcade went viral. The page’s featured image is of her giving the middle finger to President Donald Trump’s motorcade. In the three weeks after she got fired, the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page raised approximately \$124,000.

In September 2018, Juli Briskman announced that she was running as a Democrat for a seat on the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors. She also posted an “Update” on her “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page about her run for office (including a link to a Washington Post story about her campaign) and explaining that she had decided not to appeal the dismissal of the wrongful termination lawsuit she had filed against her former employer, and that she had “agreed to accept payment for my severance” to settle the case.

² See www.gofundme.com.

In December 2018, Juli Briskman posted another update to the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page, announcing her campaign website and Facebook page, and asking, “Can you help with a \$10-\$25 contribution today?!?”

According to the donation history for the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe page, from the approximate time in which Briskman announced her candidacy until the page stopped accepting contributions in 2019, more than \$3,900 in donations were made.³ From approximately September 2018 (when she announced her candidacy) until the filing of her Statement of Economic Interest in March 2019, Juli Briskman received the following 11 donations of \$50 or more from her GoFundMe page, totaling \$1,700.⁴

Donor	Timeframe	Amount	Notes
David Steichen	6 Months Ago	\$250	The GoFundMe donation appears to have been made Jan 3-4, according to Archive.org. Juli Briskman reported a \$250 contribution from David Steichen on Jan. 3, 2019.
Steven Kingston	6 Months Ago	\$100	
Richard Shepard	9 Months Ago	\$100	
Anonymous	9 Months Ago	\$100	
Soo Young Kim	9 Months Ago	\$500	Juli Briskman reported receiving a \$500 contribution from Soo Young Kim on Sept. 19, 2019.
Richard Turegano	9 Months Ago	\$100	
Tim Diggs	9 Months Ago	\$100	
Naren Shaker	9 Months Ago	\$100	
Bobette Gordon	9 Months Ago	\$200	Juli Briskman reported receiving a \$200 contribution from Bobette Gordon on Sept. 13, 2019.
Anonymous	9 Months Ago	\$75	
Elizabeth Riley	9 Months Ago	\$75	The donation appears to have been made on Sept. 13, 2018, via Archive.org.
Total		\$1,700	

On March 13, 2019, Juli Briskman filed a Statement of Economic Interest with the Loudoun County Office of Elections.

Juli Briskman filed using the 2015 version of the Statement of Economic Interest. The Statement asks, “During the past six months did a business, government, or individual other than a relative or personal friend (i) furnish you or a member of your immediate family with any gift or entertainment at a single event, and the value received exceeded \$50 or (ii) furnish you or a member of your immediate family with gifts or entertainment in any combination and the total value received exceeded \$100 and for which you or the member of your immediate family neither paid nor rendered services in exchange? Account for entertainment events only if the average value per person attending the event exceeded \$50. Account for all business entertainment (except if related to the private profession or occupation of you or the member of your immediate family who received such business

³ Thank You Juli Briskman GoFundMe page, Accessed July 3, 2019 (note: the timeframe counts backwards from the date the page was accessed – in this case, July 3, 2019).

⁴ Thank You Juli Briskman GoFundMe page, Accessed July 3, 2019

entertainment) even if unrelated to your official duties.”⁵ In response, Juli Briskman indicated that she had not received any gifts of more than \$50 over the prior six months.

II. The Law

Va. Code Section 2.2-3115 requires a candidate for local office to file a Statement of Economic Interest to complete her application to appear on the ballot for election. The candidate submitting the Statement of Economic Interest must “swear or affirm that the information provided on [the] statement is full, true, and correct to the best of [her] knowledge.”

Per the Virginia Conflict of Interests and Ethics Advisory Council’s website, “A filing using the previous version of the forms is not valid and does not satisfy your filing requirement.”⁶

Furthermore, “Campaign committees are required to establish a campaign depository in a financial institution located within the Commonwealth. The Statement of Organization will require your committee to identify the name and address of the committee’s PRIMARY financial institution. You are not required to provide the committee’s bank account number. *****PERSONAL BANK ACCOUNTS MAY NOT BE USED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES*****” (emphasis in the original).⁷

III. Analysis

- Did Juli Briskman fail to qualify for the ballot when she failed to file the December 2018 version of the Statement of Economic Interest? If the statement on the Virginia Conflict of Interests and Ethics Advisory Council’s website is accurate, then Juli Briskman’s filing of the 2015 version of the Statement of Economic Interest was insufficient to meet her filing requirements and should be disqualified and removed from the ballot.
- Did Juli Briskman file a materially inaccurate Statement of Economic Interest when she failed to disclose donations received via the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page after she announced her candidacy? If Juli Briskman personally accepted donations in excess of \$50 made via the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page after she announced her candidacy, she filed an inaccurate Statement of Economic Interest when she “[swore or affirmed]” that she did not receive any gifts in excess of \$50.
- Did Juli Briskman deposit campaign contributions in her personal bank account when she, as the beneficiary of the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page, withdrew donations into her personal bank account, and then deposited them into her campaign account? Since Virginia does not require itemization of campaign

⁵ Statement of Economic Interest: Juli Briskman, Loudoun County Office of Elections, March 18, 2019

⁶ <http://ethics.dls.virginia.gov/conflict-of-interest.asp> (accessed August 8, 2019)

⁷ “Summary of Laws and Policies Candidate Campaign Committees,” Virginia Department of Elections, Feb. 12, 2019, at 12; available here: https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formswarehouse/Campaign-Finance/2019/CandidateSummary2019_02_12.pdf.

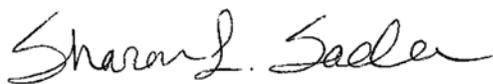
contributions of less than \$200, it is impossible to match those GoFundMe donations with campaign contributions. However, based on publicly available information, it appears that at least three campaign contributions were initially received as donations via the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page: Soo Young Kim, \$500 (Sept. 2019), Bobette Gordon, \$200 (Sept. 20019), and David Steichen, \$250 (Jan. 2019). If these are the same funds, then Juli Briskman either authorized the donations to her to be withdrawn into her campaign depository (in violation of the platform’s terms of use and without including the proper fundraising disclaimers on the page), or she deposited the funds into her personal bank account, in violation of the prohibition on doing so.

- Were anonymous GoFundMe donations deposited into Juli Briskman’s campaign account? If the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page donations made after Juli Briskman announced her candidacy were converted into campaign contributions, then her campaign accepted anonymous contributions in violation of the prohibition on doing so.
- If Juli Briskman converted contributions to the “Thank You Juli Briskman” GoFundMe Page into campaign contributions, was that a violation of GoFundMe’s terms of use?

If Juli Briskman has failed to qualify for the ballot, her name should immediately be removed. And on behalf of the voters of Loudoun County, it is critical that the potential violations be investigated immediately; and if any violations are found, that they are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Please keep us informed of the status of your investigations.

Sincerely,



Sharon Sadler
Chairman, Loudoun County Republican Committee

Cc: John O’Bannon, Vice Chair, Virginia Board of Elections
Cc: Jamilah D. LeCruise, Secretary, Virginia Board of Elections
Cc: Kristen Kalina, Chairman, Loudoun County Electoral Board
Cc: Dianna Price, Vice Chairman, Loudoun County Electoral Board
Cc: Ellen Heald, Secretary, Loudoun County Electoral Board