

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
CAMPAIGN FINANCE AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE BOARD**

**Findings in the Matter of the Acceptance of a
Prohibited Contribution During the 2006 Legislative Session
By the Friends of Austin Bleess Committee**

Summary of the Allegations and Responses

In response to an inquiry from the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (“the Board”) Austin Bleess, candidate, and Bradley Gerdin, treasurer, of the Friends of Austin Bleess Committee confirmed in a letter dated September 6, 2006, that the Committee accepted a contribution from the House Republican Campaign Committee (HRCC), on May 4, 2006. The 2006 Legislative Session was held from March 1 to May 21, 2006.

Minnesota Statutes, section 10A.273, subdivision 1, prohibits candidates from soliciting or accepting a contribution from a party unit established within a house of the legislature during a regular legislative session. A candidate who violates this section is subject to a civil penalty imposed by the board of up to \$1,000.

Mr. Bleess and Mr. Gerdin state, “...we extend our sincere apologies. As a first time campaign committee we were unaware of this statute...We are very willing to take the necessary actions to correct this mistake.”

This matter was considered by the Board in executive session on October 17, 2006.

Based on the above Summary of the Allegations and Responses and Relevant Statutes, the Board makes the following:

Finding Concerning Probable Cause

There is evidence that the Friends of Austin Bleess Committee accepted a \$1,000 contribution from the HRCC during the 2006 regular legislative session. The Board finds probable cause to believe that the Committee inadvertently violated Minnesota Statutes, section 10A.273, subdivision 1.

Based on the above Finding Concerning Probable Cause, the Board issues the following:

ORDER

1. For accepting a contribution from the HRCC during the 2006 legislative session the Board orders the Friends of Austin Bleess Committee to pay a civil penalty of \$1,000, which is one times the amount of the contribution.
2. The Board directs the Friends of Austin Bleess Committee to return \$1,000 to the HRCC and forward to the Board a copy of the letter and check returning the contribution.

3. The Friends of Austin Bleess Committee is directed to send to the Board payment of the civil penalty and a copy of the check and letter returning the contribution within thirty days of receipt of this order.
4. If the Friends of Austin Bleess Committee does not comply with the provisions of this order, the Board's Executive Director shall refer this matter to the Ramsey County Attorney for civil enforcement pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 10A.273.
5. The Board investigation of this matter is entered into the public record in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 10A.02, subdivision 11, and upon payment by the Friends of Austin Bleess Committee of the civil penalty imposed herein, the matter is concluded.

Dated: October 17, 2006



Bob Milbert, Chair
Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

Relevant Statutes

Minnesota Statutes, section 10A.273, subdivision 1. **Contributions during legislative session.**

(a) A candidate for the legislature or for constitutional office, the candidate's principal campaign committee, or a political committee or party unit established by all or a part of the party organization within a house of the legislature, must not solicit or accept a contribution from a registered lobbyist, political committee, political fund, or dissolving principal campaign committee, or from a party unit established by the party organization within a house of the legislature, during a regular session of the legislature.