

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

ORDER

IN THE MATTER OF THE INVESTIGATION OF LAURA WALKER, FREEBORN COUNTY DFL:

On January 5, 2017, the Board authorized an investigation of the Freeborn County DFL and its former treasurer, Laura Walker, to determine whether the party unit's funds were used as permitted by law and whether Ms. Walker falsely certified the party unit's campaign finance reports. The investigation was prompted by the Freeborn County DFL's request to waive late filing fees for the 2016 pre-general-election report on the grounds that the party unit had just discovered that Ms. Walker had made unauthorized withdrawals from the party unit's bank account.

Criminal charges were filed against Ms. Walker and in June 2017, she pleaded guilty to one count of felony financial transaction card fraud. At the plea hearing, Ms. Walker admitted that she had made unauthorized purchases on the party unit's bankcard for personal use.

At the September 21, 2017, sentencing hearing, Ms. Walker was placed on probation for five years. The conditions of Ms. Walker's probation include payment of \$3,420.78 in restitution to the Freeborn County DFL. The restitution award was based on the party unit chair's best estimate of the amount that Ms. Walker had taken from the party unit. As a condition of probation, Ms. Walker also was ordered not to work or volunteer for any party unit or in any political capacity for five years.

Because the criminal investigation of this matter has resolved the questions to be answered by the Board's investigation, there is no reason to continue the Board's investigation. Similarly, because Ms. Walker must repay the party unit as a condition of her probation, there is no need for the Board to order this repayment under its civil authority.

The Board also has the authority to impose additional civil penalties against Ms. Walker for the conversion of party unit funds to personal use and the false certification of the party unit's reports. The felony criminal conviction, however, is a more severe consequence for Ms. Walker's actions than a civil penalty. In addition, the probationary term barring Ms. Walker from political volunteering for five years ensures that she cannot repeat her offense. For these reasons, the Board will not impose any civil penalties in this case. The Board, however, will grant the party unit's request to waive the \$350 in late filing fees that it incurred due to Ms. Walker's actions.

Based on the information above, the Board issues the following:

Order

The investigation in this matter is dismissed. The \$350 in late filings fees incurred by the Freeborn County DFL for the 2016 pre-primary-election report are waived.

/s/ Daniel N. Rosen
Daniel N. Rosen, Chair
Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

Date: November 1, 2017