



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE:
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An Essex County Superior Court judge has ruled that former Newark Mayor and state Senator Sharpe James violated state campaign finance laws when he took \$94,004 from a campaign account to pay for criminal defense costs.

In a decision issued Friday August 17, Judge Harriet F. Klein granted a summary judgment motion to the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission and ordered James to reimburse \$94,004 to the campaign fund. She also imposed a \$30,000 fine and enjoined James from further violations. James has a right to appeal.

Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director, said the Commission applauds Judge Klein's ruling.

"As I said when we filed this lawsuit in 2011, candidates who disregard the law must face the consequences," Brindle said. "Sometimes it takes longer than we would like. But in the end, the Commission aggressively enforces campaign finance law and that is what has happened here."

The suit named as defendants Sharpe James; Cheryl Johnson, his treasurer; and the Election Fund of Sharpe James. It alleged that the defendants violated the New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act and breached their fiduciary duties to the contributors of James' mayoral campaign.

The Complaint alleges that the campaign funds were expended in connection with criminal investigations by the United States Attorney's Office and the Attorney General's office in New Jersey. James was indicted, and subsequently convicted in federal court on April 16, 2008.

Brindle said ELEC filed the lawsuit in conjunction with the Attorney General's office. He added that he appreciated its assistance in the case, particularly the work of Deputy Attorney General Brian O. Lipman. Lipman is Assistant Section Chief of the Board of Public Utilities.

Brindle also praised the efforts of ELEC staff members for their work on the case, including Carol Hoekje, ELEC's Legal Director, and Shreve Marshall, Director of Review and Investigation.

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