



## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE:  
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<sup>1</sup> Revised

The New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, represented by the Attorney General's Office, filed a civil lawsuit yesterday<sup>1</sup> in the Superior Court of New Jersey seeking repayment of \$140,000 in campaign funds that were used to fund criminal defense costs on behalf of Joseph Coniglio, a former state senator in the 38<sup>th</sup> Legislative District.

The suit names as defendants Joseph Coniglio and his treasurers, Theresa Romano and Louis Romano, and alleges that the defendants violated the New Jersey Campaign Contributions and Expenditures Reporting Act and breached their fiduciary duties to the contributors of Coniglio's legislative campaigns.

The Complaint alleges that the campaign funds were expended in connection with a criminal investigation by the United States Attorney's Office. Coniglio was indicted on February 14, 2008, and subsequently convicted in federal court on April 17, 2009.

The complaint seeks, among other things: (1) an order requiring the defendants to reimburse the fund for the illegal payments; (2) maximum statutory penalties for each offense; (3) to enjoin further payments from the fund in violation of New Jersey law and (4) costs and fees.

"Elected officials and their treasurers must abide by the law in managing their campaign accounts," said Jeff Brindle, Executive Director of the Commission. "Candidates are not permitted to use campaign funds to defend themselves in a criminal matter."

ELEC is an independent agency, which is authorized by statute to pursue civil violations of campaign finance law. The ELEC lawsuit announced today was handled by the Division of Law within the Office of the Attorney General. Brindle expressed appreciation for the Department's assistance.

A copy of the complaint can be obtained at the Commission's website at [www.elec.state.nj.us](http://www.elec.state.nj.us).

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