



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE:
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The New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission filed a civil lawsuit today in the Superior Court of New Jersey seeking repayment of \$94,004 in campaign funds that were used to fund criminal defense costs on behalf of Sharpe James, a former Newark mayor and state senator.

The suit names as defendants Sharpe James; Cheryl Johnson, his treasurer; and the Election Fund of Sharpe James, and alleges 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.

The complaint seeks, among other things: (1) to enjoin further payments from the fund in violation of New Jersey law; (2) an order requiring the defendants to reimburse the fund for the illegal payments; (3) maximum statutory penalties of \$6,000 per offense; and (4) costs and fees.

"All candidates and former candidates need to abide by the law in managing their campaign accounts," said Jeff Brindle, Executive Director of the Commission. "Candidates who disregard the law must face strong consequences, or else the law will be meaningless."

ELEC is an independent agency, which is authorized by statute to pursue civil violations of campaign finance law.

A copy of the complaint can be obtained online at the Commission's website at www.elec.state.nj.us/pdf/files/press_releases/sjames_complaint_052011.pdf.

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