



# STATE OF RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF ELECTIONS

CAMPAIGN FINANCE AUDIT

CHARMAINE WEBSTER

**CAMPAIGN FINANCE AUDIT**



Audit Conducted By: Richard E. Thornton, Director of Campaign Finance

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**  
**BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

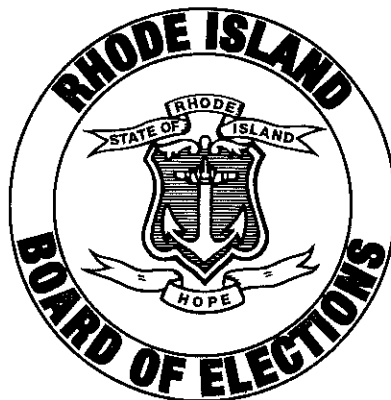
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# Charmaine Webster

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# **Charmaine Webster**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Audit Authority**

Pursuant to Rhode Island General Law §17-25-5(a)(8), the Board of Elections is authorized to perform any duties that are necessary to implement the provisions of Chapter 25 of Title 17. Without limiting the generality of this provision, the Board is authorized and empowered to: Conduct compliance reviews and audits of campaign accounts as necessary, and in a manner consistent with the provisions of Chapter 25, Title 17.

### **Audit Purpose**

Campaign Finance audits assist the Board of Elections with enforcement of campaign finance laws, provides a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of those laws and the campaign finance reporting process, verifies the accuracy and propriety of campaign finance receipts and validity and legality of campaign finance expenses and helps provide timely and accurate information to the public.

Campaign Finance audits assist and encourage candidate compliance with campaign finance reporting laws and promotes candidate accountability and integrity.

# Charmaine Webster

**Scope:** Review campaign finance reports and supporting documentation for the period June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2022.

**Methodology:** Review Contributions:

- Compare contributions received to bank statement deposits
- Compare contributions received to contributions reported on campaign finance reports
- Verify there are no prohibited contributions
- Verify contributions do not exceed aggregate annual limit

Review Expenditures:

- Compare expenditures made to bank statement checks/debits
- Compare expenditures made to expenditures reported on campaign finance reports
- Verify there are no prohibited uses of campaign funds
- Verify campaign expenditures are valid and legal.

**History:** Charmaine Webster ("Webster"), a Democrat, ran unsuccessfully for Woonsocket City Council in 2020.

In August 2022, the Board of Elections ("Board") initiated an audit of the campaign account of Webster pursuant to R.I.G.L. §17-25-5(a), due to the appearance of personal use of campaign funds.

In September 2022, the Board received via subpoena served upon the bank of Webster's campaign account, campaign account bank statements for the period June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2022.

**Findings:** The following are Findings of campaign finance violations discovered during the Audit Review of Webster's campaign account and supporting documentation:

**Contributions:**

- \$12.50 contribution was received from a business.

**Expenditures:**

- \$2,595.81 in expenditures were for personal use.

# Charmaine Webster

**Summary:** The Audit Review of Webster's campaign account and supporting documentation for the period June 1, 2020 through July 31, 2022 demonstrates:

- Campaign contributions, totaling approximately \$15,000.00, were almost entirely received from allowable sources and within statutory limits; with one contribution for \$12.50 received from a business, in violation of R.I.G.L. §17-25-10.1(h)(1).
- Personal expenses (\$2,595.81) were paid from the campaign bank account in violation of R.I.G.L. §17-25-7.2.
- A copy of the 2021 year-end campaign bank account statement was not submitted in violation of R.I.G.L. §17-25-11(c)(2).

**Auditee Response:** Webster acknowledges she spent campaign funds for personal use due to a financial hardship she was experiencing at the time. She takes responsibility for the campaign finance violations and is willing to make full restitution.

**Action:** Referral to the Office of Attorney General for their consideration