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7
8 BEFORE THE FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION
9 STATE OF CALIFORNIA

10
11 In the Matter of:

12 GEORGE DOTSON,
13 Respondent.

FPPC Case No. 17/575

STIPULATION, DECISION AND ORDER

14
15 **INTRODUCTION**

16 George Dotson (“Dotson” or “Respondent”) has served as a member of the Inglewood City
17 Council since 2013. In 2016, Dotson accepted a gift of event tickets from the Los Angeles Rams that
18 was over the annual gift limit, thereby violating the Political Reform Act (the “Act”).¹

19 **SUMMARY OF THE LAW**

20 The Act and its regulations are amended from time to time. The violation in this case occurred in
21 2016. For this reason, all legal references and discussions of law pertain to the Act’s provisions as they
22 existed at that time.

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27 ¹ The Act is contained in Government Code sections 81000 through 91014. All statutory references are to the
28 Government Code, unless otherwise indicated. The regulations of the Fair Political Practices Commission are contained in
Sections 18110 through 18997 of Title 2 of the California Code of Regulations. All regulatory references are to Title 2,
Division 6 of the California Code of Regulations, unless otherwise indicated.

1 Need for Liberal Construction and Vigorous Enforcement of the Political Reform Act

2 When enacting the Act, the people of California found and declared that previous laws regulating
3 political practices suffered from inadequate enforcement by state and local authorities.² For this reason,
4 the Act is to be construed liberally to accomplish its purposes.³ Further, the Act provides adequate
5 enforcement mechanisms so that the Act will be “vigorously enforced.”⁴

6 Gift Limits

7 Certain public officials, including elected officers of local government agencies, are prohibited
8 from accepting gifts from any single source in any calendar year with a total value of more than \$460.⁵

9 **SUMMARY OF THE FACTS**

10 Dotson’s 2016 annual statement of economic interests (“SEI”) reported a gift of tickets in the
11 amount of \$750 received from the Los Angeles Rams on September 1, 2016. In 2016, the annual gift
12 limit was \$460. Therefore, Dotson accepted a gift that was \$290 over the Act’s prescribed limit in 2016.

13 After being contacted by the Enforcement Division, Dotson wrote a personal check, dated June
14 23, 2017, to the Los Angeles Rams in the amount of \$300, in order to pay down the excess amount of the
15 gift over the limit.

16 **VIOLATIONS**

17 Count 1: Acceptance of Over-the-Limit Gift

18 Dotson accepted a gift in excess of the annual gift limit by \$290 from the Los Angeles Rams in
19 2016, in violation of Section 89503, subdivision (a).

20 **PROPOSED PENALTY**

21 This matter consists of one count. The maximum penalty that may be imposed is \$5,000 per
22 count. Thus, the maximum penalty that may be imposed is \$5,000.⁶

23 In determining the appropriate penalty for a particular violation of the Act, the Commission
24 considers the facts of the case, the public harm involved, and the purposes of the Act. Also, the

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26 ² Section 81001, subd. (h).

27 ³ Section 81003.

28 ⁴ Section 81002, subd. (f).

⁵ Section 89503, subds. (a) and (f); Regulation 18940.2.

⁶ Section 83116, subd. (c).

1 Commission considers factors such as: (a) the seriousness of the violation; (b) the presence or absence of
2 any intention to conceal, deceive or mislead; (c) whether the violation was deliberate, negligent or
3 inadvertent; (d) whether the violation was isolated or part of a pattern; (e) whether corrective
4 amendments voluntarily were filed to provide full disclosure; and (f) whether the violator has a prior
5 record of violations.⁷

6 In this case, the Enforcement Division found no evidence that Respondent intended to conceal,
7 deceive, or mislead the public. Respondent paid down the subject gift's amount over the limit shortly
8 after contact from the Enforcement Division, and stated that he was unfamiliar with the Act's gift limits.
9 Also, the economic interest (Los Angeles Rams) did not have any business before the Inglewood City
10 Council during the 12 months following the gift to Respondent. Further, because Respondent does not
11 have a prior history of violations, the violation contained herein does not appear to be part of a pattern of
12 disregard for the Act.

13 The Commission also considers penalties in prior cases involving similar violations. Similar
14 cases involving acceptance of a gift over the limit include the following:

15 • *In the Matter of David "Chico" Fuentes*; FPPC No. 12/586. Respondent was the Mayor of the
16 City of Irwindale; and, therefore, was required to file statements of economic interests. In 2012, Fuentes
17 accepted a gift over the limit by \$580 in the form of a donation given to his son to fund his college
18 education. Once Fuentes learned of the donation, he immediately paid down the gift. In August 2014,
19 the Commission approved a fine of \$2,000 on one count.

20 As to Count 1, Respondent is deserving of a penalty similar to that approved in the *Fuentes* case
21 given the similar nature of the violations.

22 In aggravation, Dotson and his candidate-controlled committee Dotson for Council 2017
23 committed an additional violation of the Act in 2017. In particular, Dotson and his committee failed to
24 timely file a 24-hour contribution report for a \$1,500 late contribution received on March 13, 2017. In
25 the interest of settlement, this additional violation is not charged herein.

26 Based on the foregoing, a penalty in the amount of \$2,000 is recommended.

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⁷ Regulation 18361.5, subd. (d).

1 **CONCLUSION**

2 Complainant, the Enforcement Division of the Fair Political Practices Commission, and
3 Respondent, George Dotson, hereby agree as follows:

4 1. Respondent violated the Act as described in the foregoing pages, which are a true and
5 accurate summary of the facts in this matter.

6 2. This stipulation will be submitted for consideration by the Fair Political Practices
7 Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting—or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard.

8 3. This stipulation resolves all factual and legal issues raised in this matter—for the purpose
9 of reaching a final disposition without the necessity of holding an administrative hearing to determine the
10 liability of Respondent pursuant to Section 83116.

11 4. Respondent understands, and hereby knowingly and voluntarily waives, any and all
12 procedural rights set forth in Sections 83115.5, 11503, 11523, and Regulations 18361.1 through 18361.9.
13 This includes, but is not limited to, the right to appear personally at any administrative hearing held in
14 this matter, to be represented by an attorney at Respondent’s own expense, to confront and cross-examine
15 all witnesses testifying at the hearing, to subpoena witnesses to testify at the hearing, to have an impartial
16 administrative law judge preside over the hearing as a hearing officer, and to have the matter judicially
17 reviewed.

18 5. Respondent agrees to the issuance of the decision and order set forth below. Also,
19 Respondent agrees to the Commission imposing against him an administrative penalty in the amount of
20 \$2,000. One or more payments totaling this amount, to be paid to the General Fund of the State of
21 California, is/are submitted with this stipulation as full payment of the administrative penalty described
22 above, and they will be held by the State of California until the Commission issues its decision and order
23 regarding this matter.

24 6. If the Commission declines to approve this stipulation—then this stipulation shall become
25 null and void, and within fifteen business days after the Commission meeting at which the stipulation is
26 rejected, all payments tendered by Respondent in connection with this stipulation shall be reimbursed to
27 Respondent. If this stipulation is not approved by the Commission, and if a full evidentiary hearing
28 before the Commission becomes necessary, neither any member of the Commission, nor the Executive

1 Director, shall be disqualified because of prior consideration of this Stipulation.

2 7. The parties to this agreement may execute their respective signature pages separately. A
3 copy of any party's executed signature page including a hardcopy of a signature page transmitted via fax
4 or as a PDF email attachment is as effective and binding as the original.

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6 Dated: _____
7 Galena West, Chief of Enforcement
8 Fair Political Practices Commission

9 Dated: _____
10 George Dotson

1 The foregoing stipulation of the parties “In the Matter of George Dotson,” FPPC Case No. 17/575 is
2 hereby accepted as the final decision and order of the Fair Political Practices Commission, effective upon
3 execution below by the Chair.

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5 IT IS SO ORDERED.

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7 Dated: _____
8 Alice T. Germond, Chair
9 Fair Political Practices Commission