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Corruption: Jocelyn Benson Gives Whitmer, Allies a Pass on Massive Illegal Spending, Refuses to Enforce Campaign Finance Act

Benson to Voters: Michigan Campaign Finance Laws Just Don't Matter

LANSING, MI, February 8, 2019 – Michigan Freedom Fund Executive Director Tony Daunt issued the following statement today after Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson broke repeated campaign promises and ignored precedent to wipe away \$2 million – or more – in potential campaign finance penalties incurred by her political allies.

“Jocelyn Benson managed in a single afternoon to pull every tooth from Michigan’s campaign finance law, to save Gretchen Whitmer and her Chief Strategist millions of dollars in fines and fees,” said Daunt. “Benson declared today that Michigan campaign finance law does not matter, while she is Secretary of State, and astounding violations of that law will essentially go unpunished. Her behavior is partisan, and it is corrupt.”

The state determined in December that a political group allied with Governor Gretchen Whitmer illegally engaged in “express advocacy” advertisements and illegally coordinated with the Whitmer campaign. The committee – Build a Better Michigan – violated campaign finance law, spending millions of dollars in television advertisement and illegally failing to disclose it as “in-kind” contributions to the Whitmer campaign. Such contributions wildly exceed donation limits, and violate the state’s prohibition on funding from corporate sources.

Build a Better Michigan was run last year by lobbyist Mark Burton, who was subsequently appointed Governor Whitmer’s Chief Strategist.

A similar violation in 2014 committed by a Republican-allied group in support of a Republican candidate resulted in penalties administered by the Secretary of State that matched the amount illegally spent. Such a penalty for Build a Better Michigan would near \$2 million.

The slap on the wrist announced today by Benson instead represents just 2 percent of the total amount illegally spent by Burton and Build a Better Michigan in support of the Whitmer campaign.

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