

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
CAMPAIGN FINANCE AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE BOARD**

CONCILIATION AGREEMENT

In the matter of the Benson (Michelle) for Senate committee (17027);

1. The Benson (Michelle) for Senate committee is the principal campaign committee of Senator Michelle Benson. The aggregate special source contribution limit, which includes contributions from lobbyists, political committees and funds, and associations not registered with the Board, was \$6,600 for senate candidates during the 2017-2018 election cycle segment. On its 2017 and 2018 reports of receipts and expenditures, the Benson committee reported receiving \$9,700 from these sources during the 2017-2018 election cycle segment. A routine reconciliation audit conducted by the Board showed that in 2018 the committee accepted but did not report an additional \$500 from a special source contributor. The committee did not return the \$3,600 that exceeded the special source contribution limit within 90 days of deposit and those excess contributions therefore are deemed to be accepted under Minnesota Statutes section 10A.15, subdivision 3.
2. In a response dated March 27, 2019, Sen. Benson agreed that the Benson committee had exceeded the special source contribution limit. The committee already has returned \$250 of the excess contributions to a special source contributor.
3. The parties agree that the committee accepted excessive contributions from special sources in violation of Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11, during the 2017-2018 election cycle segment. This is the committee's second violation of the special source limit. The first violation occurred in 2010.
4. To avoid a similar violation in the future, the committee agrees to:
 - a. Ensure that the committee's treasurer reviews and enters contributions into the Campaign Finance Reporter software within 60 days of receipt; and
 - b. Run a batch compliance report after each time contributions are entered and take steps to remedy any violations the software identifies so that problems may be resolved within the 90 days provided by statute for the return of a contribution before it is deemed accepted.
5. The committee also agrees to amend its 2018 year-end report to show the \$500 contribution from the Winthrop & Weinstine PA Political Fund that was received in December 2018. In addition, the committee agrees that it will return \$3,350 in contributions to special source contributors. The committee agrees to provide to the Board, within 90 days of the date the agreement is signed by both parties, copies of the deposited checks or other documentation

showing that the \$3,350 was received by the special source contributors to which it was returned and that the \$250 previously returned was received by that special source contributor.

6. The committee further agrees to the imposition of a civil penalty in the amount of \$7,200 for accepting contributions in excess of the limit imposed by Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11. This amount is two times the amount of the excess contributions. Of the \$7,200, \$1,800 is due within 30 days of the date the agreement is signed by both parties. The remaining \$5,400 of the penalty is, by the terms of this agreement, stayed until January 1, 2021. If the committee violates Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11, before January 1, 2021, the outstanding civil penalty is due immediately. If the committee does not violate Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11, before January 1, 2021, the outstanding civil penalty is waived.

7. If the committee does not comply with the provisions of this agreement, this matter may be reopened by the Board and the Board may take such actions as it deems appropriate.

/s/ Michelle Benson
Senator Michelle Benson
Benson (Michelle) for Senate

Dated: July 19, 2019

/s/ Margaret Leppik
Margaret Leppik, Chair
Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

Dated: June 26, 2019