



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF CAMPAIGN & POLITICAL FINANCE

ONE ASHBURTON PLACE ROOM 411
BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS 02108

MICHAEL J. SULLIVAN
DIRECTOR

TEL: (617) 727-8352
(800) 462-OCPF
FAX: (617) 727-6549

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 22, 1997

Contact: Brad Balzer

(617) 727-8352

OCPF, Audubon and Ahimsa Foundation sign disposition agreement

BOSTON -- The Office of Campaign and Political Finance announced today that it has entered into a disposition agreement with the Massachusetts Audubon Society and the Ahimsa Foundation concerning reporting of certain contributions to a ballot question committee.

The agreement states that Ahimsa and Audubon did not correctly report the true source of \$35,000 in contributions to a committee organized to support a question put to voters statewide in the November 1996 election. The question called for stricter hunting and trapping regulations and altered the composition of the board of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. The question was approved by voters.

As part of the agreement, Ahimsa and Audubon agreed to make a joint payment of \$1,500 to the Commonwealth. Each organization also agreed to notify OCPF in advance if it plans to contribute or expend any funds to support or oppose any ballot question in Massachusetts through Dec. 31, 2000.

According to the agreement, Ahimsa gave Audubon \$35,000 during October 1996 to be in turn given to Protect Pets and Wildlife (PROPAW), the committee supporting the question. Audubon received this money, as well as an additional \$225 in contributions from two other parties, and donated it to PROPAW, which reported it as a contribution from Audubon. Audubon also made and accurately reported \$51,447 in in-kind contributions to PROPAW over a period of several months, according to earlier filings by Audubon and PROPAW.

The campaign finance law prohibits any party from making a political contribution in any name other than its own or in any manner that disguises the true origin of the contribution.

Audubon received disclosure forms from OCPF to report receiving money on behalf of the ballot question, but did not file them until March 1997, after OCPF received a complaint. Ahimsa also filed the necessary report in March after being contacted by OCPF. The agreement states that Audubon erroneously believed that PROPAW would report any raising of funds and, as a result, Audubon did not have to file any report. For its part, Ahimsa said it was unfamiliar with reporting requirements because it had never made any expenditures on behalf of a ballot question before.

OCPF Director Michael J. Sullivan said the agreement illustrates the importance of disclosing the true source of a contribution.

“Using another party as a pass-through, whether intentional or not, and improperly reporting the contribution deprives the public of its right to get the complete picture of who is funding a campaign,” Sullivan said.

A copy of the agreement is available at OCPF, Room 411, McCormack Building, One Ashburton Place, Boston.

-- END --