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## **OCPF, Lopes Committee sign disposition agreement**

BOSTON – The Office of Campaign and Political Finance announced today that it has entered into a disposition agreement with the Committee to Elect Candice Early Lopes for violations of the campaign finance law relating to complete and timely disclosure of political fundraising, spending and other committee activities.

The agreement states that the Committee, based in Springfield, failed to report several thousand dollars in receipts, expenditures, liabilities and in-kind contributions relating to Lopes' unsuccessful candidacy for state representative in 1994. It also states that Lopes failed to file reports on time and had not paid the statutory fine for filing her 1996 year-end report 74 days after the deadline.

To resolve the matter, Lopes and her treasurer, Manuel A. Lopes, agreed to a joint payment of \$2,500 to the Commonwealth. Candice Lopes also agreed to pay a \$740 fine for failing to file her 1996 report on time. The agreement also stipulates that the Committee will dissolve after filing amendments for the last three years.

The agreement concludes more than a year of discussions between OCPF and the Committee regarding information missing from the Committee's 1994 reports. OCPF originally asked for additional information from the Committee during a routine audit of those three reports, which showed incomplete information regarding some receipts and expenditures as well as a negative ending balance. Despite subsequent efforts by the Committee and OCPF, the Committee was ultimately unable to identify the source of \$4,823 in receipts and the payees for \$1,631 in expenditures, the status of \$2,094 in liabilities incurred and the specific purpose of \$375 in reimbursements to the candidate.

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Candice Lopes' \$740 payment is for filing her 1996 year-end report on April 4, 1997, 74 days after the due date of Jan. 21, 1997. She had earlier paid the maximum \$2,500 fine for filing her 1995 year-end report almost 11 months late. M.G.L. Chapter 55, Section 3, establishes a fine of \$10 per day for late-filed reports.

In addition to the payments, the Committee also agreed to file amendments to its 1994, 1995 and 1996 reports to account for as much of the missing information as possible before dissolving. Candice Lopes also agreed to additional reporting requirements if she runs for any state, county or municipal office anytime in the next three years.

The agreement was signed by Candice and Manuel Lopes and OCPF Director Michael J. Sullivan.

"This agreement illustrates the importance of keeping good records of all campaign finance activity, as well as filing reports on time," Sullivan said. "Candidates who don't do so run the risk of quickly losing track of their account and running up hundreds, even thousands, of dollars in late fines. Most importantly, they also deprive the public of the disclosure required under state law."

Copies of the agreement and of the Committee's disclosure reports are available at OCPF, Room 411, McCormack Building, One Ashburton Place.

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