



LIBERTY JUSTICE CENTER

November 4, 2025

Via mail & e-mail

Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares
Office of the Attorney General
202 North 9th Street
Richmond, VA 237219
[REDACTED]

RE: Demand for Investigation of Campaign Finance Violations by Spanberger for Governor Campaign

Attorney General Miyares:

On behalf of registered Portsmouth, Virginia voters¹, the Liberty Justice Center² writes to seek an investigation into campaign finance violations by the Spanberger for Governor campaign. Enclosed with this letter is documentary evidence of these alleged violations. Pursuant to Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-51 and § 24.2-104, as Attorney General, we request that you investigate the Spanberger for Governor campaign for violations of Commonwealth election laws based on the evidence provided herein. We ask that you provide written confirmation that your office has initiated, or will initiate, an investigation by November 7, 2025.

BACKGROUND

On Friday, August 8, 2025, the Spanberger for Governor campaign hosted a campaign event in several areas inside I.C. Norcom High School, a public high school in the Portsmouth Public School Division (“PPS”). The campaign event took place during school hours on the first day teachers returned to work for the school

¹ LJC represents Portsmouth, Virginia residents Christopher Craig, Christine Henderson, Melissa Middleton, James Middleton, and Janice Branch.

² LJC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public-interest law firm dedicated to promoting government accountability and educational freedom. You can learn more about our mission at libertyjusticecenter.org.

year. The campaign also filmed content subsequently posted on campaign social media accounts.³ School maintenance and operations staff were instructed to assist in setting up for the event and to manicure the I.C. Norcom grounds for this campaign event.⁴ The use of I.C. Norcom public school facilities was memorialized in a rental agreement between PPS and the campaign.⁵ The cost to the campaign to use a public high school? Free.

Gubernatorial candidate Abigail Spanberger held this political rally at I.C. Norcom High School to announce her education platform. It is estimated that over 60 people attended the political rally, including PPS teachers and administrators who were working that day. Other candidates for political office attended as well, including Lieutenant Governor candidate Ghazala Hashmi, Attorney General candidate Jay Jones, House District 90 candidate Rodney Nickens, Jr., and Chesapeake Sheriff candidate Dave Rosado.⁶

The school's principal, Teesha Sanders, encouraged teachers to attend the event.⁷ Principal Sanders communicated the number of teachers expected to attend directly to Annabelle Trowbridge, an Operations Associate for the Spanberger for Governor campaign.⁸ Principal Sanders also inquired as to how many teachers Ms. Trowbridge would like at the campaign event.⁹ Along with Ms. Trowbridge, Sophia Shapiro, the campaign's deputy director for advance operations, coordinated with PPS personnel to secure use of I.C. Norcom facilities.¹⁰ PPS's Chief Operations

³ Attachment 1 – Screen shots of multiple social media accounts from the Spanberger for Governor campaign and others who attended the campaign event.

⁴ Attachment 2 – July 22, 2025 email from Dr. Jerry Simmons to Mr. Ronald Hill.

⁵ Attachment 2 – PPS Agreement for Rental of School Facility.

⁶ Based on social medial accounts, a full list of political candidates believed in attendance at the I.C. Norcom event are: Lieutenant Governor candidate Ghazala Hashmi, Attorney General candidate Jay Jones, House District 84 candidate Nadarius Clark, House District 90 candidate Rodney Nickens, Jr., House District 92 candidate Bonita Anthony, and Chesapeake Sheriff candidate Dave Rosado. LaKeesha Atkinson, Vice-Chair of the Portsmouth Public School Board, also attended.

⁷ Attachment 3 – August 6, 2025 email from Principal Teesha Sanders to Spanberger campaign operatives.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Attachment 4 – PPS Response to October 17, 2025 Request for Information.

Officer, Dr. Jerry Simmons, directed I.C. Norcom service crew to arrive early and “assist the team from Senator Lucas’ office with setup for the event.”¹¹ Dr. Lewis also directed maintenance staff to “ensure the grounds were manicured for the day.”¹² PPS’s human resources team had reserved Classroom 217 for a back to school two day training program, and another PPS entity also requested use of Classroom 217. But Classroom 217 was subsequently reserved by the Spanberger campaign, so both PPS groups were “bumped out” to make room for the Spanberger campaign with knowledge of PPS leaders.¹³

PPS provided the use of the I.C. Norcom library, classrooms, other spaces, and maintenance support free of charge.¹⁴ Ms. Trowbridge signed a zero dollar “rental” agreement on behalf of the campaign. PPS also violated its own policies in hosting this event, including failing to secure event insurance from the Spanberger campaign for its political rally.¹⁵ Relevant to the authority of your office, the Spanberger for Governor campaign did not disclose any in-kind contribution from PPS on its campaign finance report that covers the period from July 1, 2025, through August 31, 2025.¹⁶

DEMAND FOR INVESTIGATION – ELECTION CRIMES

Gratuitous use of I.C. Norcom High School facilities, resources, and teachers are an in-kind campaign contribution from PPS vision to the Spanberger campaign. The Spanberger campaign failed to report this contribution in violation of the Virginia Election Code.

Virginia Election Code § 42.2-947.4(B)(2) requires campaign finance reports include itemized contributor information for “each contributor who has contributed an aggregate of more than \$100, including cash and in-kind contributions.” Required reportable information includes the contributor’s identifying information and the contribution date and amount. “In-kind contributions” are “the donation of goods,

¹¹ *Id.* at 99.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.* at 139.

¹⁴ Attachment 2 – Sat 008-00–9

¹⁵ Attachment 5 – PPS Policy for Rental of School Facilities.

¹⁶ Va. Bd. of Elections, *Campaign Finance Scheduled Reports: Spanberger for Governor (CC-23-02436)*, (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://cfreports.elections.virginia.gov/Report/Index/461117>.

services, property, or other thing of value, other than money, including an expenditure controlled by, coordinated with, or made upon the authorization of a candidate, his campaign committee, or an agent of the candidate or his campaign committee, that is provided for free.”¹⁷ The enclosed documents are clear: Annabelle Trowbridge and Sophia Shapiro, agents of the Spanberger campaign, coordinated with PPS personnel—Principal Teesha Sanders, Dr. Jerry Simmons, and Katrina Downey—to use I.C. Norcom High School and personnel for a campaign event for free. The Spanberger for Governor campaign did not report this campaign donation on its scheduled campaign finance report for July 1, 2025, to August 31, 2025.¹⁸

The Spanberger for Governor Campaign’s failure to report this contribution is, at best, subject to civil penalties.¹⁹ However, a willful false material statement on the scheduled report constitutes election fraud and is a Class 5 felony.²⁰ Failing to report gratuitous use of a public school facility for a political rally demands investigation under Virginia election laws.

The taxpayers respectfully request that you use your authority to investigate, enforce, and if appropriate, prosecute the Spanberger for Governor campaign’s alleged violations of Virginia election laws. We look forward to your office’s commitment to investigate by November 7, 2025.

Please contact me at the email address below should you wish to further discuss this matter.

Respectfully,

Brendan Philbin, Esq.

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Enc. Attachments

¹⁷ VA. CODE ANN. § 24.2-945.1 (emphasis added)

¹⁸ Va. Bd. of Elections, *Campaign Finance Scheduled Reports: Spanberger for Governor (CC-23-02436)*, (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://cfreports.elections.virginia.gov/Report/Index/461117>.

¹⁹ VA. CODE ANN. § 24.2-953.4

²⁰ VA. CODE ANN. § 24.2-1016