



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

In the Matter of)

) MUR 6974

)
)
) Foundation for a Secure and
) Prosperous America and Susan
) Neithamer in her official capacity)
) as treasurer

STATEMENT OF REASONS OF COMMISSIONER ANN M. RAVEL

The Commission voted unanimously to find no reason to believe that the respondents violated the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended. I agreed with the Office of the General Counsel that neither the television advertisements nor the internet videos were independent expenditures. The Commission could not agree on its factual and legal analysis, however, because of proposed language about what some call the "internet exemption."

This matter raises again the importance of the Commission's obligation to inform itself about how political campaigns are utilizing evolving technology. Political campaign strategies and activities continue to shift rapidly as the digital playing field expands in new and important ways.¹ Voters consume information differently than they did even one or two election cycles ago. It is our job as a Commission to learn about these issues and discuss them—not only amongst ourselves as policymakers, but with members of the public and the regulated community, too. The Commission itself will be outmoded if it fails to study and consider these issues. Consistent with its purpose, the Commission should open its doors to hear from outside experts, technologists, activists, voters and others about modern campaigning and its opportunities. Carrying out the Commission's mission to protect the integrity of our elections requires us to stay informed about technology and its advancement. An effective Commission should welcome the discussion. In the words of the late John W. Gardner, "the hallmark of our age is the tension between aspirations and sluggish institutions."

8/3/16
Date _____

Ann M. Ravel
Ann M. Ravel
Commission

¹ See I-Hsien Sherwood, *Digital Political Ads Offer a Direct Line Into Voters' Hearts and Pockets*, CAMPAIGN US (Feb. 2, 2016), <http://www.campaignlive.com/article/digital-political-ads-offer-direct-line-voters-hearts-pockets/1381804>; Issie Lapowsky, *Political Ad Spending Online is About to Explode*, WIRED (Aug. 18, 2015, 4:50 PM), <http://www.wired.com/2015/08/digital-political-ads-2016/>.

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