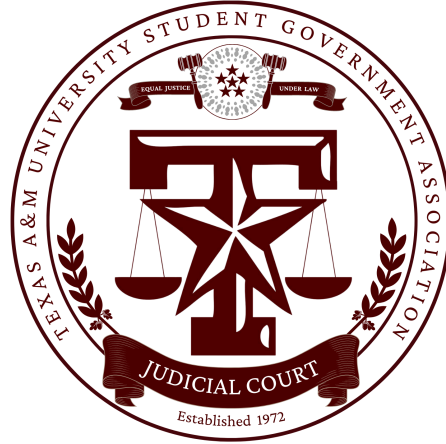


SPRING TERM, 2024



# JUDICIAL COURT OF TEXAS A&M

## Syllabus

ANKIT LULLA *v.* ELECTION COMMISSION

CERTIORARI TO THE TEXAS A&M STUDENT GOVERNMENT  
ASSOCIATION ELECTION COMMISSION

No. 76-03. Argued March 18, 2024 - Decided March 20, 2024

Ankit Lulla (“Petitioner”), a candidate for Student Body President, submitted a Petition for a Writ of Certiorari regarding the alleged violations made by the campaign of Cade Coppinger, another Student Body President candidate. The Election Commission (“E.C.”) assessed multiple violation reports regarding the Coppinger Campaign, eight of which were included in the original petition. Mr. Lulla filed a petition with the Court on the grounds that the E.C. was incorrect in their interpretation of the Student Government Association Code (“S.G.A.C.”) and has asked the Judicial Court to reverse the decision of the E.C. to not fine Mr. Coppinger. The Petitioner asserts that the evidence submitted was sufficient for the E.C. to determine, with certainty, that Mr. Coppinger’s campaign had violated the Election Rules & Regulations. The specific violations in question are as follows: #24, 25, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 46. In this case, the Judicial Court must determine the validity of the E.C.’s interpretation and application of the S.G.A.C. as well as whether there is sufficient evidence for a violation to be applied to Mr. Coppinger’s campaign.

LULLA *v.* ELECTION COMMISSION

## Dissenting Opinion

**NANDWANI, J., dissenting in part.**

Cade Coppinger, a candidate for Student Body President, was accused of five violations that the Election Commission decided not to uphold. Ankit Lulla, another candidate for Student Body President, sought to challenge the Election Commission's decisions and assess the appropriate sanctions on Mr. Coppinger's budget. Although I agree with my fellow justices in that the majority of the accusations against the Election Commission do not have enough substantive evidence to overturn, there is one instance in which the Election Commission erred. More specifically, the soccer ball that was expensed in Mr. Coppinger's expense report was an incorrect valuation, and moreover, not reflective of the true nature of the soccer ball. According to V.S.G.A.C. §601.6(4) (f),

“It is the responsibility of the candidate to accurately report and assign value to all campaign materials. For campaign materials that are determined to be unexpensed, the Election Commission shall impose a sanction on the candidate's budget proportional to the value of the unexpensed materials, as determined by a reasonable individual using the mean of at least 2 publicly available prices for similar items. However, if the Election Commission obtains a preponderance of evidence, supported by logical common sense, indicating that the candidate had the ability to report and value the campaign materials but failed to do so, the candidate will be subject to additional penalties of 50% of the determined value of each unexpensed item.”

Under this statute, it is clear that for campaign materials that are determined to be unexpensed, the appropriate fines will be imposed on the candidate's budget. In this case, the soccer ball used in the Coppinger Campaign video was unexpensed. Sure, there was a soccer ball that was recorded on the expense sheet, but that is irrelevant to this scenario because it is not wholly similar to the actual soccer ball that was used in the video. Generally speaking, both items are indeed soccer balls, however, that is not sufficient to meet the threshold of a “similar” item. The item in question must

be similar on all fronts- quality, design, price, etc. The item that was unexpensed was the branded, professional soccer ball that was used in the video. As a result, the Election Commission should have used the aforementioned statute to calculate the appropriate value of the soccer ball, and Coppinger should have been assessed a fine that was proportional to the complete value of the unexpensed item.