

The Law Is The Law

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For some reason, political people too often don't take campaign financing laws seriously. Two recent cases in Connecticut in which the boom was lowered on lawbreakers show why they should.

Last month, the State Elections Enforcement Commission accepted a settlement in which two Danbury-area lawyers agreed to pay maximum fines of \$2,000 for concealing the source of a \$500 donation in 2004 to state Sen. David Cappiello, now the Republican nominee for Congress in the 5th District, who knew nothing of the deception.

Jack Garamella of Brookfield wanted to contribute to Mr. Cappiello's state Senate campaign, but thought it would be ill-advised because at the time he was considering seeking the Democratic nomination for probate judge. Mr. Garamella persuaded a junior law partner, Christopher K. Leonard, to write the Cappiello campaign a \$500 check, which Mr. Garamella then reimbursed.

Concealing a donation violates state law. You'd think lawyers would know that. The fines are an appropriate reminder.

Earlier in July, the State Elections Enforcement Commission denied public financing — which would have amounted to \$85,000 — to state Sen. Joseph Crisco, a Democrat, for his re-election campaign this year against Republican Leo Moscato of Derby.

Mr. Crisco admits to breaking the rules by allowing the secretary of his campaign treasurer to sign the treasurer's name to an affidavit promising to abide by the rules of the new system providing for public financing of state elections. Candidates, campaign treasurers and deputy treasurers must sign sworn affidavits in the presence of a notary stating that they understand and will abide by the rules. "

My treasurer, who has since resigned, was out of state. I thought it was acceptable," said the clueless Mr. Crisco of his decision to let the secretary sign the treasurer's name in his presence.

Mr. Crisco must not take the rules seriously. It isn't the secretary who must understand and obey the law; it's the treasurer and, especially, the candidate.

The loss of \$85,000 in public financing for his re-election campaign is a painful outcome for Mr. Crisco but an entirely appropriate warning for him and other candidates not to be cavalier about the rules.

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