GOVERNMENT

OF

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

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MONDAY

APRIL 18, 2022

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The District of Columbia Board of Elections convened a Special Board Meeting via Video-Teleconference, pursuant to notice at 10:30 a.m. EST, Gary Thompson, Chair, presiding.

BOARD OF ELECTIONS MEMBERS PRESENT:

GARY THOMPSON, Chair MIKE GILL, Member KARYN GREENFIELD, Member

BOARD OF ELECTIONS STAFF PRESENT:

MONICA HOLMAN EVANS, Director

TERRI STROUD, General Counsel

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v. Kenyan R. McDuffie, Candidate for the	
office of Attorney General for the	
District of Columbia in the June 21, 2022	
Democratic Primary Election	
Adjournment	

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(10:35 a.m.)

CHAIR THOMPSON: It's Monday, April

18, and this is a special meeting of the Board
of Elections. My name is Gary Thompson. I'm
the Chair and I am here today with the other two
Board members, Karyn Greenfield and Mike Gill.

If you could both please indicate your presence?

MEMBER GILL: Mike Gill is here.

MEMBER GREENFIELD: Karyn Greenfield

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, great, so we have a quorum. We are in session and we are here today to discuss a nominating petition challenge for the Office of Attorney General for the District of Columbia. The challenge was filed by Bruce Spiva and, oh, and the candidate being challenged is Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie.

I also want to confirm from what it looks like is the presence of a court reporter?

COURT REPORTER: Yes, hi, I'm here.

is here.

Okay, thank you so 1 CHAIR THOMPSON: 2 much. I assume that's from a private party, correct, the court reporter? 3 4 PARTICIPANT: It's Neal R. Gross 5 Reporting. 6 CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, well, 7 welcome, Court Reporter, and welcome, everybody 8 We appreciate you being here. This is an else. 9 important issue, and there have been briefs filed and a prehearing conference held, so I'll 10 11 just briefly explain where we are. 12 A prehearing conference was held on 13 April 13 between counsel for the parties. 14 parties are represented. That prehearing 15 conference was attended by General Counsel Terri 16 Stroud, oh, by Christine? 17 MS. STROUD: It was conducted by a 18 member of the Office of the General Counsel 19 staff, Christine Pembroke. She conducted the 20 prehearing conference on behalf of the General 21 Counsel's Office.

Thank you.

CHAIR THOMPSON:

22

And

most importantly with respect to that prehearing conference, the two parties reached a stipulation as to the facts, meaning there are no facts in dispute.

During their presentations, counsel can summarize those facts, but as I understand it, everybody agrees on all of the material facts, so we do not have to conduct a contested hearing with witnesses and documents entered into evidence, et cetera.

Instead, this hearing is essentially an extension of the briefs that have already been filed by the two sides. This is time for counsel to present oral argument with respect to their positions.

Just for the record, we received the nominating petition challenge on March 29, 2022, filed by Mr. Spiva through his counsel. We then received on April 6 Councilmember McDuffie's motion to dismiss filed by his counsel.

We then received an opposition to that motion to dismiss on April 11, and the next

day on April 12, we received from Mr. McDuffie a motion for leave to file a surreply with some additional argument made. So, we have all of that in the record. We've read all of those briefs.

During the prehearing conference,
the parties also agreed to proceed today in two
steps. First, we're going to hear very briefly
some arguments about procedural points that were
brought up in the surreply for the first time.

Councilmember McDuffie, will present four or five minutes, the challenger's counsel will then present for five minutes, and then the candidate's counsel will have three minutes and it will wrap up that discussion about procedural points.

We'll then proceed to the main substantive argument on the challenge with 20 minutes per side and then five minutes for rebuttal.

We're not really going to keep

strict time limits. If somebody really needs extra time and, you know, we're in the middle of discussing things, we'll just keep going, but we will be keeping time just to make sure we're, you know, cognizant of how long this is taking, you know, broadly, because we can talk a really long time if you let us.

So, that's basically the setup for today. Before we jump in, I'm just going to make some opening comments, but anything else from you, Terri, before we proceed?

MS. STROUD: No, I think that I'll wait until after the Board members make their opening comments, and if there's any discussion that needs to be had about further information about how we'll proceed, then I'll jump in.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, so here is what I wanted to say at the outset to both parties, and the public, and members of the media, and counsel.

We are a three-member board. We are entirely fair and impartial on this issue.

We've had no ex parte communications. Nobody has called us, lobbied us in any way. We've received the briefs. We've read the statute, of course. You know, we've read the reference case law and regulations.

We understand the issue, and speaking for myself, there's clearly two reasonable perspectives on this issue that arise from the statute in question.

And I wanted to say at the outset that we have the utmost respect for Councilmember McDuffie and Mr. Spiva. We respect the right, obviously, of Councilmember McDuffie to run for this office and file nominating petitions.

We respect the right of Mr. Spiva, like any candidate or elector, to challenge that petition. So, the playing field is completely level heading into this.

The positions have been masterfully briefed by counsel for both sides. I happen to be professionally acquainted with counsel on

1 both sides from previous work on nonprofit 2 boards and everything is neutral in that regard as well. 3 4 And the parties have had a chance to 5 meet in the prehearing conference to enter stipulations and tee this up in a manner that I 6 think is evidently fair. 7 8 So, you know, we are blank slates at 9 this point ready to hear argument from counsel. I just wanted to make that clear at the outset, 10 11 especially to the press and members of the 12 public, that we're entirely neutral on this 13 point. 14 So, with that, I'll ask my fellow 15 Board members, Mike Gill, if you have any 16 opening comments before we proceed? 17 MEMBER GILL: No, I'm good. We can 18 start. 19 CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, Karyn Greenfield? 20 21 MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm good. Thank 22 you.

1	CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, with that,
2	we'll proceed with the motion for leave to file
3	a surreply and the procedural points that are
4	addressed therein, and the counsel for the
5	candidate, Councilmember McDuffie, is going to
6	go first, and among their counsel, I'm not sure
7	who is going to take the lead on that one, Mr.
8	Pozen, Mr. Hilgers, or somebody.
9	MR. POZEN: That would be me, Mr.
10	Chairman, Thorn Pozen.
11	CHAIR THOMPSON: Yeah, okay, great,
12	please proceed.
13	MS. STROUD: And Mr. Pozen, if you
14	could first just state your you did state
15	your name, but your address for the record, I
16	guess your professional address?
17	MR. POZEN: Yeah, 1432 K Street,
18	Suite 400. I'm with the firm of GMP.
19	Okay, well, good morning, Mr.
20	Chairman and members of the Board of Elections.
21	Once again, my name is Thorn Pozen, and as I
22	said, I'm with the firm of GMP.

I am counsel to the McDuffie 2022 campaign and I'm here this morning, as you know, with my co-counsels, Joe Sandler and Kevin Hilgers, in response to a challenge to Mr. McDuffie's qualifications to hold the office of attorney general.

I will first be arguing that the Board should dismiss the complaint here on procedural grounds, then if you choose to proceed to the merits of the matter, first I and then Mr. Sandler will argue that you should dismiss the challenge because Mr. McDuffie, the respondent, does meet those qualifications as a matter of law.

We have three points on the procedural side. Point number one is the Board should dismiss this challenge to the nominating petition because it is procedurally deficient and not complete.

Number two, even if you agree with complainant's argument that this should be viewed as a challenge to respondent's

qualifications, his arguments fail procedurally there as well.

And number three, as to the issue of our timing and our ability to raise this procedural challenge at this point, I'd say that failure to comply with the requirements for a proper challenge before the Board is akin to jurisdiction, and of course it is well-settled law that a jurisdictional challenge is always ripe before the court or tribunal.

As to our first point, complainant has styled his pleadings as a challenge to nominating petition.

The rules for challenging a candidate's nominating petitions are laid out in D.C. law and in the DCMR at Title 3, Section 409 and 410.3, and they, in most pertinent point, require the challenger to, with specificity, actually challenge specific names, line numbers, and signatures of particular petitions. The complaint here does none of that.

The challenge before you is

therefore clearly on its face not a challenge to respondent's petition, and the challenge does not meet the regulatory requirements of the challenge to nominating petition.

Further, DCMR Title 3, Section 409.2 states that any challenges received by the Board that do not meet the requirements of this section shall be considered improperly filed and not adjudicated.

As to our second point, even if this is to be viewed as a challenge to respondent's qualifications, the regulatory requirements for challenging the qualifications of a candidate are spelled out in DCMR Title 3, Section 408.1 and 2 and 410.4, and they mandate that the complaint be sworn and notarized, as well as requiring that it include a resident address and telephone number of the respondent. The complaint here contains none of those either.

Where one could argue that addresses and phone numbers are mere technicalities and perhaps excusable under the Board's allowance

for non-technical pleadings, surely having to swear to a qualifications complaint on the one hand or to have to actually specify specific defective petitions in a petition challenge on the other are no mere technicality.

As to our third point, as stated, failure to comply with the requirements for proper challenge before the Board is akin to jurisdiction in that under Board regulations, when presented with a substantively incomplete complaint, the Board is not empowered to adjudicate the claim being brought, and as noted, it is well-settled law that in a jurisdictional challenge, it is always ripe to come before the board or tribunal.

So, in conclusion, the complaint here is facially incomplete both as a challenge to a nominating petition as it is styled and as a challenge to a candidate's qualifications, and respondent's ability to raise these procedural issues is ripe at this time.

For those reasons, the Board should

dismiss the complainant's challenge and dismiss this case without the need to proceed further. Thank you.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, and now we'll hear from counsel for the challenger.

MR. HOWARD: Good morning, Mr.

Chairman and members of the Board of Elections.

My name is Ted Howard. I am with Wiley Rein

LLP, 2050 M Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

The procedural issues that have been raised by the respondent arise for the first time in the context of the surreply brief in regard to which there is, of course, no provision in the Board's procedures.

That being said, we regard the matter of the way in which the pleading was designated as consistent with the ruling in Lawrence v. Board of Elections, that the statute pursuant to which the validity of a petition may be challenged encompasses both technical challenges of the sort to which Mr. Pozen made reference, but also challenges to a prospective

candidate's qualifications.

That is the context in which we characterized our filing as a nominating petition challenge and we believe that to be consistent with the court's analysis in Lawrence.

That said, we do acknowledge that the nominating petition challenge to Mr.

McDuffie's qualifications certainly may be regarded as falling within the provisions of DCMR Title 3, Section 408.1, and therefore, although they were certainly signed, the petition was certainly, the challenge was certainly signed by Mr. Spiva, that it was not sworn and it was not notarized.

Certainly, it's clear, we think,
that the respondent knew what it was, knew what
it was intended to be, made specific reference
to the complaint, quote-unquote, numerous times
in its motion to dismiss, so there was certainly
no surprise or prejudice associated with how the
document was designated.

And in regards to the lack of it being sworn or notarized, I think that those requirements basically serve an important purpose in making sure that the person filing such a document engages in appropriate due diligence to make sure that the factual representations in the document are accurate.

There being no contest here with regard to the factual accuracy of the allegations in the petition, we don't think that there's any harm associated with the fact that the document was not sworn and not notarized, and in any event, those are technical issues that certainly can be cured if the Board deems that necessary.

And I think that pretty much sums up our position on these procedural issues. The Board, certainly in its discretion under DCMR 3-4005, may waive any of the procedural formalities that the respondent has raised in the absence of any prejudice.

And in any event, under Kabel v.

Board of Elections, 962 A 2nd 919, at pages 920921, the arguments that have been raised in the
challenge give rise to an obligation on the
Board to independently and affirmatively inquire
into the qualifications that have been
challenged, and so we don't regard any dismissal
of the challenge on these procedural grounds to
prevent the Board from conducting this inquiry
in any event. So, I think I'll stop there.
Thank you.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr.

Howard. Mr. Pozen, in terms of rebuttal, maybe
you could take that as a question, the question
being that the nominating petition challenge was
signed. It was cosigned by a Board employee
whose signature appears on the challenge
document. I don't think there's any doubt as to
its authenticity.

And also, as pointed out, the regulations at Title 3, Section 400.5 do recite that the Board may, for good cause shown, waive any of the provisions of this chapter if, in the

judgement of the Board, the waiver will not prejudice the right of any party and is not otherwise prohibited by law.

So, isn't it effectively in substance an authentic challenge? And I guess I'll just wrap into that question what prejudice is there if we essentially deem the challenge to have been, in substance, to have been signed, and sworn, and notarized?

MR. POZEN: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the question. I will initially point that there was no discussion here about the ripeness of the challenge, so I appreciate that point.

But to your question, I think the issue of the notarization and the requirement that the challenge be sworn is more than simply to the accuracy of it. It goes to the fact that the challenger is willing to fully and completely stand by the complaint filed.

It, I think, is somewhat akin to the statute and regulations regarding federal

campaigns where campaign, the candidate making the political advertisement gets up at the end and says I made this advertisement and I stand by it.

I think there's an obligation for a challenger making a serious challenge, as the challenger here has done, that he or she stand by his or her complaint in a formal way.

And although I recognize that yes,
the Board has both the right to waive technical
issues, as I said, I don't believe that this is
merely a technical issue on the one hand, and
has the right to waive other issues when there's
no prejudice.

Here, I think the fact that the challenging candidate has chosen not to formally either follow the rules on the one hand or to formally stand by his challenge on the other, I think that is something that the Board should not, in this case, waive.

And I also would challenge the assertion that the Lawrence case holds that this

proceeding can go forward.

I think a careful reading of the
Lawrence case shows that what it really stands
for, the proposition that for judicial
expediency and efficiency that challenges to
qualifications and the petitions can be heard
by, in that case, the court, at the same time,
but it does not excuse in any way the process
and procedure for doing so, or conflate the
processes and procedures for doing so, or excuse
the challenger from following those proper
processes and procedures, which they have not
done in this case, as so determined.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Quick question, the challenge was filed on March 29, it looks like at 11:51 a.m. I know you filed a motion to dismiss on April 6. When did your client or when did you, as counsel, receive a copy of the petition challenge from March 29? Was it the same day or the next day or --

MR. POZEN: It may have been either the same day or the next day. I don't recall

the exact time we received the number of emails and communications around that.

I don't think that there's any -let me make it clear. We're not suggesting that
there's an issue with regard to service or
process.

We reference the term process in our pleadings in our reference to the process that was filed by the challenger in putting together their complaint rather than service of process.

We don't have any issue with the method of service of process to be clear.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, well, thank you so much. I mean, clearly the petition might have been called a, quote, complaint, instead of a challenge. It might not have referenced 408.2. It might have been notarized.

And we'll, as a Board, we'll have to decide to what extent the absence of a notarization could be prejudicial or substantively disqualifying to the challenge, and we'll take this under advisement and proceed

with the main argument on the qualification issue.

Okay, well, then jumping into that next phase, we've set aside 20 minutes each for the challenger and then the candidate to present their argument.

What I wanted to say at the outset here is a lot of times, you know, in a court, you'll hear a judge say counsel, I've read your briefs. You don't have to repeat your main argument. Let's just jump right into it.

I think, in this case, it would be helpful, in fact, if both sides summarized their position, read the statute out loud, you know, walked us through how they read the statute as applied to the candidate, including for the benefit of those out there who haven't read the briefs.

I think it would be helpful for everybody to understand the two perspectives on how you read this. So, with that, I would invite counsel for Mr. Spiva to proceed.

1 MR. HOWARD: Thank you, Mr. 2 Chairman, and if I may, just because it's possible that there may be some reporting of 3 what's going on here, my client's name is 4 5 pronounced Spiva rather than Spiva. I've made the mistake myself, so I'm certainly not 6 7 admonishing you or anyone else, but in the 8 interests of accuracy, it is Spiva. 9 CHAIR THOMPSON: Thank you so much. I apologize for that. 10 11 It's quite all right MR. HOWARD: and I'm sure he would say so as well. 12 13 Turning to the merits, I believe 14 it's clear that the parties agree that the respondent's eligibility to stand as a candidate 15 16 for Attorney General reduces to a single 17 question of statutory interpretation. 18 That question is in his position as 19 a member of the D.C. Council since 2012, has Mr. McDuffie, for at least five of those last ten 20 21 years, been, quote, actively engaged as an

attorney employed in the District of Columbia by

the District of Columbia?

How do we get there? We get there first because, as a matter of fact, and the parties have stipulated that the facts are not in dispute, Mr. McDuffie did practice law as an attorney for several years after graduating from law school.

He then was elected to the Council in 2012 pursuant, I believe, to a special election, and subsequently in the following year, elected as part of the regular election cycle and has served as a public servant on the Council since then.

If I could, I had arranged to have a single slide available to assist with the argument, and if the Board's IT staff is capable of posting that at this point, that would be very helpful, I think. Thank you very much. We appreciate that assistance.

So, this is the critical statute, and we've tried to isolate the critical language in the statute.

1 Given that Mr. McDuffie

unquestionably is a member in good standing of the Bar of the District of Columbia and has been, as the parties agree, the question is does he also meet one of the additional eligibility requirements that are set forth in Section 1-301.83(a)(5) of the D.C. Code?

That statute, those statutory
provisions require that in addition to being a
member of the Bar, that the candidate have been,
quote, actively engaged for at least five of the
ten years immediately preceding assumption of
the position of Attorney General, and that
would, I believe, be as of January 1, 2023.

Has that person been actively
engaged as either an attorney in the practice of
law in the District of Columbia, a judge of a
court in the District of Columbia, a professor
of law in a law school in the District of
Columbia, or as an attorney employed in the
District of Columbia by the United States or the
District of Columbia?

It is our position that, and I believe the parties are in agreement, that Mr. McDuffie would not qualify under Part (a)(5) a, b, or c, that being he is not an attorney in the practice of law, he is not a judge, and he is not a professor.

That is why the critical issue comes down to the applicability or not of subpart or Subsection (d). Has he been actively engaged as an attorney employed in the District of Columbia by the District of Columbia in his capacity as a councilmember?

We submit, and believe we have shown in our papers, both the initial challenge and our reply/opposition to the motion to dismiss, that only our interpretation of Subsection (d) of Part 5 gives full meaning to all of the relevant words of Section 1-301.83(a) in accordance with the applicable tenets of statutory construction and the Council's clear intent.

The respondent contends that because

he is a licensed attorney, and a member of the Bar, and is employed by D.C., that he therefore qualifies under Subsection (d) as a matter of law, but as one can see from looking at the statute or the whole of the statute as relevant to the dispute here, being a member in good standing of the Bar of District of Columbia is a separate freestanding precondition.

He must also be, quote, actively engaged as an attorney employed by D.C., and in order for those words to have meaning, it can't just be that being a member of the Bar suffices. Otherwise, actively engaged as an attorney is deprived of any substantive content or meaning.

In order to give Subsection (d) substantive content equivalent to the three categories that precede it, we believe actively engaged as an attorney must necessarily mean employed in a position in which the person is functioning or acting as an attorney.

These are objective criteria for eligibility. Someone is either an attorney in

the practice of law in the District of Columbia or they aren't. Someone is either a judge of a court in the District of Columbia or they aren't. Someone is either a professor of law in a law school in D.C. or they aren't.

The only way that D can also be applied simply and straightforwardly as an objective criterion for eligibility, the person has to be employed as an attorney, employed in a position in which they're acting as an attorney. That is, we believe, the straightforward plain meaning of Subsection (d).

A councilmember is not, quote, actively engaged as an attorney, because he or she is serving in a position in the D.C. government for which status as a licensed attorney is not even required.

In addition, it's important to focus on the fact that these criterion were intended to serve as a minimum standard of experience.

An attorney in the practice of law, a judge, a professor of law, all in their day-

to-day work, and responsibilities, and duties develop experience and expertise with regard to legal matters that puts them in a position to have satisfied a minimum standard of experience.

If someone is an attorney employed by the District but not actively engaged as such, they do not presumptively develop that same level of experience and expertise.

They are like the schoolteacher identified in the reply brief that may have a law degree and may have practiced law, but then decides that they would rather be a public schoolteacher in the District of Columbia public school system. That person is not actively engaged as an attorney even though they are an attorney and even though they are employed by the District of Columbia.

Respondent, in his surreply, says that -- forgive me, I lost my train of thought just briefly.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Can I jump in with a question?

MR. HOWARD: Yes, please.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Yeah, thank you for the schoolteacher example. I guess if you've got that maybe one extreme of this hypothetical, these hypothetical examples, and then on the other extreme say as Assistant Attorney General or, you know, General Counsel to the Executive Office of the Mayor, somebody who is clearly actively engaged as an attorney, with the title attorney, employed by D.C.

Is there something -- I guess my question is do you have to, in order to pass this part of the test, do you have to literally carry the title of attorney, like counsel in an agency with the title counsel, you know, short of being really outside of the active engagement as an attorney like a schoolteacher? Is there some in-between and how might we discern where to draw the line?

MR. HOWARD: There certainly is an in-between and we think it's important that the Council recognized such in crafting this

statute, that there is a middle ground, if you will, between being an attorney in the practice of law in D.C. and being actively engaged as a government attorney, and it's not necessary, in our view, that attorney be part of the person's title.

They might be hearing examiner, an administrative law judge, conceivably even a member of the Board of Elections, and still be actively engaged as an attorney employed by the District of Columbia even if attorney or counsel isn't part of their formal title.

However, we do think it's important, from the experiential standpoint, that there be a way to identify someone as actively engaged as an attorney in order for Subsection (d) to meet the same purpose as Subsections A, B, and C of Section (a)(5).

The respondent has said that he's distinguishable from the schoolteacher because he, quote, performs attorney work while serving as a councilmember, but that argument really, I

think, only begs the question rather than answering it.

Because even assuming that serving on the Council is more lawyerly, quote-unquote, than working as a schoolteacher, that does nothing to undercut the point, our point that under respondent's reading of the statute, the teacher with the law degree still fully qualifies to be eligible for attorney general. We don't believe that was the Council's intent.

And secondly, it puts the Board then in a position of having to make ad hoc judgments as to whether the Councilmember's, quote, application of his knowledge and skills as an attorney to his work on the Council is sufficiently close to being actively engaged as an attorney to satisfy the statute or not.

We don't believe that the Council intended for the Board to be put in the position of having to make subjective, ad hoc determinations as to whether someone who has legal training and applies that legal training

in the context of a job that is not an attorney's job nevertheless qualifies or does not qualify to be eligible to run for this campaign.

An attorney who, anyone who has a law license and is a member of the Bar who is employed by D.C., irrespective of the nature of their duties and responsibilities and whether those duties and responsibilities could be characterized as being actively engaged as an attorney, basically just reads Subsection (d) out of the statute, and for those reasons, we believe that Councilmember McDuffie does not qualify to run for attorney general.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Can you comment briefly on this statute 1-301.83 having a counterpart with respect to qualifications to become a judge?

MR. HOWARD: Can you elaborate on the question a little bit more, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIR THOMPSON: I believe there's another statute, 11-1501, that sets forth the

qualifications to become a judge on the Superior Court in D.C., that has pretty close to the same language, including the same four subparts.

So, when I look at them both, they both seem to indicate there's some degree of qualification, experience and qualification to become either a judge or the attorney general, so is there any precedent or support you draw from looking at the analogous statute with respect to becoming a judge?

MR. HOWARD: I would say only in the sense that we believe that it underscores the extent to which the Council attached significance to the subparts of 1-301.83(a)(5) from the standpoint of experience and knowledge, knowledge and expertise.

In other words, by adopting these provisions which are very closely analogous to the pre-existing statute for qualification to be a judge, they definitely intended for these provisions to serve a very important purpose, and that purpose, we don't believe, is served by

merely being an attorney who is a member of the 1 2 Bar and employed by the District. Okay, well, if that 3 CHAIR THOMPSON: 4 concludes your opening argument, you've got some 5 time in rebuttal. Were you finished with your opening presentation? 6 7 MR. HOWARD: That concludes my 8 opening remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 9 CHAIR THOMPSON: So, then we'll turn to counsel for Councilmember McDuffie, I think 10 either Mr. Sandler or Mr. Pozen? 11 12 I'm prepared to go first MR. POZEN: 13 and then will be joined second by my colleague, 14 Mr. Sandler. 15 CHAIR THOMPSON: Okav. 16 MR. POZEN: If it pleases the Board, 17 again my name is Thorn Pozen of GMP representing 18 along with my co-counsels, Joe Sandler and Kevin 19 Hilgers, respondent Kenyan McDuffie. I'll be 20 presenting respondent's first legal argument on 21 the merits of the matter, and then my colleague,

as I just said, Mr. Sandler, will argue the

second point and will sum up for us.

I'm going to speak to a technical point here. I think there were conflated within the discussion that we just had a couple of different issues of law that were represented and discussed. I'm going to speak to more of a technical side of this and then Mr. Sandler will expand on the arguments a little bit more broadly.

Our first point being that the Board should dismiss this complaint for failure to state a claim, should dismiss the complaint for failure to state a claim because the respondent has been actively engaged as an attorney employed in the District by the District, and therefore is qualified to hold the office of attorney general under D.C. law.

As you've heard, there is no dispute about the minimum requirements for a D.C.

Attorney General under the Code that's been cited, D.C. Code 1-301.83(a)(5) and the particular Subsections A through D.

And as noted, they require that the candidate be, among other things, actively engaged for the last five years, five of the last ten years as one of the following, either A, an attorney in the practice of law in the District of Columbia, a judge in a court in the District of Columbia, a law professor in a law school in the District of Columbia, or, under Subsection (d), an attorney employed in the District and employed by either the United States or here in the District of Columbia, and we argue the respondent meets those qualifications under Subsection (d).

In fact, complainant has conceded and appears to have conceded today, but certainly conceded in his complaint, that respondent is an attorney and that he is employed in the District of Columbia and employed by the District of Columbia.

It is further undisputed that under D.C. Bar rules, as a member of the D.C. Bar, respondent may hold out as authorized or

competent to practice law in the District of Columbia by indicating that he is an attorney.

The issue here, I think as stated well, is then that the complainant, that the issue comes down to what is Subsection (d), and then the issue here then is the complainant tries to conflate being actively engaged as an attorney with being employed as an attorney.

And you heard complainant's counsel make that statement at the very beginning, indicating that somehow the statute, that the respondent here needed to be employed as an attorney.

The key point being that the statutory requirement is not that respondent be employed as an attorney, but simply that he be actively engaged as an attorney and they are not the same thing.

So, what does actively engaged mean?

I can say that it does not mean that respondent

must be actively engaged in the practice of law

because that would render the alternative

statutory requirement which specifically speaks to the practice of law as superfluous.

Instead, actively engaged in this context here simply means, under the plain reading of the statute, a candidate must be an active and engaged attorney, and it does not require him or her to be a specific type of attorney or even to hold a job that requires him to be an attorney.

In that way, Subsection (d) serves as a catchall provision allowing the D.C.

Attorney General to be an attorney from a wider array of legal experiences and backgrounds other than just an attorney from a firm, a law school, or a courthouse.

A qualified, actively engaged attorney in this case, however, is not, as the complainant would have you believe, any D.C. resident who happens to have a law degree or any resident who happens to be a member of the D.C. Bar.

Our clear reading of the statute

would exclude D.C. Bar members who are not in active status, which is a step beyond simply being in good standing, Bar members who are not employed by the District of Columbia or the federal government and Bar members who are not employed in the District of Columbia.

Additionally, further to the question of statutory interpretation, we know that when interpreting election law language, it is imperative to stress that when the Board looks at the law, it does so with an eye which views the franchise broadly.

For example, three cases that were cited in the Lawrence case that was relied on as noted earlier by complainant were Williams-Godfrey v. District of Columbia Board of Elections, quote, a meaningful part of the right to vote is to vote for a candidate of one's choice.

Gollin v. District of Columbia Board of Elections states that a prime purpose in formulating the original District of Columbia

election law was to keep the franchise open to as many people as possible.

And Kamins v. Board of Elections
linked the right to vote with the need to find a
construction of the election's statute in favor
of the franchise.

Respondent, therefore, is undeniably an attorney, and also undeniably, by virtue of his employment as a D.C. Councilmember, he is employed in the District and is employed by the District, and especially when viewed, as it must be, with an expansive eye, he is additionally clearly actively engaged as an attorney, and therefore, respondent satisfies the statutory requirements to serve as Attorney General in the District of Columbia by law.

At best then, with all of Mr.

McDuffie's legal qualifications and tremendous

legal experience, what complainant here is

really trying to argue is that, in complainant's

mind, respondent shouldn't be D.C. Attorney

General, not that he cannot be D.C. Attorney

General, and, of course, that is and must be a matter for District voters to decide, not him.

With that, I say that this challenge should be dismissed as a matter of law and I turn to Mr. Sandler to argue our second broader point. Mr. Sandler?

MR. SANDLER: Thank you. Thank you, Thorn, and thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Board. The essence of the challenger's position as just stated by the challenger's attorney is that in order to meet the test of Subsection (5)(d), the individual must be employed in a position in which the person is acting or functioning as an attorney. That's what he just said.

If that's the case, then clearly

Subsection (5)(d) would be superfluous because

that individual would meet the requirements of

Subsection (5)(a). They would be an attorney in

the practice of law in the District of Columbia.

More critically, that begs the question of to what class, to what universe of

people does Subsection (5)(d) apply? Who would be included in it?

Challenger's counsel has given, both in their reply and today's arguments, suggests that that class would consist of positions for which D.C. Bar admission is required, specifically D.C. administrative law judges or hearing officers.

But that's a reading that makes no sense because in what sense are D.C. administrative law judges or hearing officers employed in a position in which they're acting or functioning as attorneys?

They don't have clients. Their position is not one of an attorney. They're not providing legal advice. They don't meet the challenger's own criteria, and yet they're the only ones in the universe in the class to which he says was intended to be covered by Subsection (5)(d). That cannot be the case. It's clear that some broader class must have been intended.

In that regard, it's instructive

that challenger's counsel refer to the policy behind, policy purpose behind the various categories laid out in Subsection (5).

And he indicated that the purpose was to ensure that the individual had experience in which their day-to-day work would involve developing experience and expertise with regard to legal matters that would give them a minimal level of experience that you would want or expect in somebody running for the office of attorney general.

If that's the case, then we would -if what the challenger is really saying is it's
a position in which one needs the skills of an
attorney to do their job, or, in fact,
necessarily employs skills in their job that
only an attorney is trained to have and use,
it's clear that Councilmember McDuffie meets
that qualification.

To begin with, for at least three years, the first three years of the applicable ten-year period from 2015 to 2017, Councilmember

McDuffie served as Chair of the Council's

Judiciary Committee which oversees the D.C.

courts, court rules and procedures, judicial

nominations, the criminal justice system,

including the Metropolitan Police Department,

the Department of Corrections, the Sentencing

Commission, the juvenile justice system, and not

incidentally, the Office of Attorney General

itself.

In that capacity, Councilmember

McDuffie developed and moved to enact sweeping

reforms of D.C.'s criminal justice law, of the

juvenile justice system, regulation of police

practices, and laws governing the use of

criminal records, including the ban the box

legislation, the use of criminal records and

background checks for housing, employment, and

other matters.

I ask, as a matter of common sense, to members of the Board, can you imagine that job being performed by a non-attorney? Is that any more feasible as a matter of reality, as a

matter of practicality, than a non-attorney being a hearing officer or administrative law judge?

You might say well, that's only
three of the ten years that's required. The
councilmember, of course, has served as Chair
since 2017 of the Committee on Business and
Economic Development, which he currently still
holds that position, in which he is overseeing
and continues to oversee complicated regulatory
issues in the areas of securities, insurance,
banking, and the Public Service Commission.

He developed and obtained passage of the REACH Act that requires a racial equity impact assessment for all Council legislation, just by way of example.

And again, there's no law that says, as the challenger points out, that you have to be an attorney to be a D.C. councilmember, but it's difficult to imagine this job being done, that Councilmember McDuffie would not bring and doesn't necessarily being his background and

experience from being a state and federal prosecutor, a legal policy advisor, and an attorney to the interpretation, and understanding of, and crafting the amendments of the complex statutes overseen by this committee, Business and Economic Development.

I ask, again, the members of the Board, just as a practical matter, could a non-attorney bring a sufficient depth of understanding of the structure of the D.C. charter or code to design something like the REACH Act that touches every aspect of the entire legal cannon of the District of Columbia in terms of racial equity impact --

CHAIR THOMPSON: Mr. Sandler?

MR. SANDLER: Yes?

CHAIR THOMPSON: I mean, obviously
there are councilmembers who do all of these
things or similar things who are not attorneys.
There are also councilmembers current and in the
past who are attorneys, but also happen to
maintain a law practice separately, or I'm

thinking of Jack Evans, or also concurrently a 1 2 professor of law like Councilmember Cheh. How do you compare those two 3 4 scenarios where there are lawyers that do these 5 other things, but also plenty of non-lawyers on the Council? 6 7 MR. SANDLER: Yes, there are 8 certainly non-lawyers on the Council and they 9 obviously would be disqualified from running by virtue of the fact that, you know, they're not 10 11 members of the Bar. 12 I think the question is where do you draw the line in this and who is included in 13 14 this class that's intended to be in Subsection 15 (d)? 16 And I think that it is, although the 17 challenger suggested that the Board be called on 18 to make ad hoc judgments, I think there has to 19 be some --20 If you're going to talk about ALJs 21 and hearing officers because they -- yeah,

they're required to be attorneys by statute, but

that's not what this says, and the Council could have said that if they meant it.

They're talking about that you're functioning as an attorney. In the words of the challenger, including a position -- I'm sorry, that the day-to-day work involves developing expertise and experience with regard to legal matters. I think it's fair to take that into account.

Yes, and there are non-legal councilmembers automatically treated, but the ones who, like Councilmember McDuffie, necessarily every day and over this period of years, applied their legal skills, and in many cases, couldn't really do the job without it, they're not schoolteachers. It's not the same.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Yeah, what about the schoolteacher scenario where a person is an attorney in good standing with the Bar of the District of Columbia, remains an attorney in good standing, has switched careers and is now a schoolteacher with DCPS employed by the District

of Columbia?

In other words, are those two sort of raw facts enough to qualify you're, A, an attorney in good standing with the Bar, and B, you're employed by the District of Columbia?

MR. SANDLER: We would argue they are as a technical matter, but to the extent that there's a thought that there's something more involved, there's something more required by the language actively engaged as opposed to employed as attorney, actively engaged as an attorney employed by the District of Columbia.

I think Councilmember McDuffie meets that, you know, that something more standard as well.

CHAIR THOMPSON: You asked the question where do you draw the line? So, if the Board has to get into the realm of deciding on a case by case basis is somebody, quote, actively engaged, you know, now you're on a spectrum from schoolteacher to, you know, assistant attorney general.

And if you get into the realm of positions that don't require the title of attorney, how do you start to -- what sort of test would you employ to sort of decide what is enough engagement? When does engagement become active enough to qualify? How would you define that test?

MR. SANDLER: I think if they're an active member of the Bar and their work inherently involves, as in the words of the challenger, expertise and experience, you know, as part of their role with regard to legal issues, legal matters, that that, you know, that that would be sufficient.

And there will always be, you know, some great cases. I mean, you can look at other positions where you have to be an attorney in order to take it, but then the question is suppose you're still a member of the Bar, but you haven't actively practiced in years?

For example, look at the Register of Wills, the qualifications for which are set

forth in Section 11-2102. Suppose that person, they had to be an attorney to get the job and they have to be actively engaged to get it, but suppose it's been ten years since then?

They've been Register of Wills for ten years and now they want to run for Attorney General, not qualified because, you know? It doesn't make sense.

Sure, they are, because it makes sense just in the same way as a hearing officer or administrative law judge. It's inherently part of the job and we suggest the same is true in this case, and for that reason also, we believe Councilmember McDuffie clearly meets the qualifications of Subsection (5)(d).

CHAIR THOMPSON: To be, quote, actively engaged as an attorney, do you have to have a client?

MR. SANDLER: No, clearly not, otherwise what about Mr. Howard's administrative law judges and hearing examiners? They don't have clients.

1 CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, any other 2 questions from other Board members? All right, Mr. Sandler --3 4 MEMBER GILL: I don't. Gary, you 5 ask the questions. I'm good. CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay. All right, 6 7 well, thank you so much, Mr. Sandler. We've got 8 five minutes of rebuttal time from Mr. Howard. 9 MR. HOWARD: Thank you, Mr. I think it's clear that we are not 10 Chairman. 11 suggesting that every attorney, every person 12 actively engaged as an attorney within the meaning of Subsection (d) is engaged in the 13 14 practice of law as Mr. Sandler suggested. 15 The practice of law is, we would 16 submit, a term of art as defined by Rule 49 of 17 the D.C. Court of Appeals Rules, and it clearly 18 contemplates representation of clients in an attorney-client relationship. 19 20 There are plenty of government 21 lawyers who are actively engaged as attorneys 22 who do not fit that definition. So, there is no way in which our view of Subsection (d) basically makes Subsection (a) superfluous.

But what we are saying is that
whatever position the person is filling and
performing in his or her employment by the
federal government or the District, they have to
be acting in a way that contemplates and allows
the development of a certain knowledge and
expertise to allow them to be eligible for
either serving as a judge or as attorney
general, and --

CHAIR THOMPSON: But how do you answer the point made that, you know, this isn't like being a schoolteacher, being a councilmember, even though technically you don't have to be a lawyer, you very much are engaged in reading laws, and drafting laws, holding committee hearings about laws?

Is that a level of active engagement as an attorney that, at least in the case of a councilmember like Mr. McDuffie, would qualify?

MR. HOWARD: We don't believe so

because the position doesn't require you to be an attorney, and then it's really just a subjective judgment as to whether or not the person conducts him or herself on a day-to-day basis in a way that an attorney would, and we don't see how the Board is in a position to make that kind of judgment.

If they aren't actively engaged as an attorney, the fact that they may have legal training and the fact that they may rely on that legal training as one way in which they do their jobs does not satisfy the requirements of Subsection (d).

And we believe that the statute was crafted in a way to allow for objective judgments, and by placing the Board in the position of having to determine whether -- I believe the current Chair of the Judiciary Committee on the Council is Charles Allen. He, I believe, is not an attorney.

So, you know, whether or not the way he does his job as compared to the way

Councilmember McDuffie did that job from the standpoint of, you know, applying legal knowledge or legal training, it all gets really, really fuzzy.

You know, respectfully, and I hope without being too colloquial, I think that folks who are in this legal community know what is meant when someone says he or she is a government lawyer, and that does not contemplate a councilmember, or a congressman, or a senator, even though many of those folks have law degrees.

It's the way of functioning in such a way as to draw on and develop experience that the Council regarded as imperative in order to be a judge or run for attorney general. I don't think I can add anything more to that.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, thank you, counsel. Thank you to all of the attorneys and everybody that helped with the briefs that were submitted. It's been really clarifying for us to review this issue from both sides.

Believe me, I have, and I think we all have, parsed, and re-parsed, and underlined, and re-underlined this statute 1-301.83, which incidentally is incorporated by reference into the charter itself at D.C. Code 1-204.35.

So, with that, what we're going to do now, and I'll make a motion to this effect, is go into executive session, which the regulations allow us to do as a three-member board.

So, I would make a motion that we do that, the Board go into executive session pursuant to D.C. Official Code 2-575(b) to deliberate upon a decision in this matter of Spiva v. McDuffie, thank you, regarding the qualifications of Mr. McDuffie to hold the office of attorney general.

A majority of the Board members

present must vote in favor of closure to enter

into executive session, so, and what this allows

us to do is basically deliberate the way a

three-member, you know, appellate panel would

deliberate privately to exchange our views of what we just heard.

We've not discussed this, the Board, before, the three of us together, this issue, so this will be our first time hashing it out with each other.

So, and then we'll come back. When we're done deliberating, we'll come back on the record for a motion, potentially a second, and the passing of a motion to decide the matter one way or the other.

It's kind of hard to guess how long we'll be in executive session, probably an hour, so 1:00 p.m. I'll say 1:00 p.m. that we'll come back on the record to deliver our decision.

And then we intend to follow that ruling, whatever it is, by the end of the day with a written decision, if we can with our help, to finalize the written opinion and issue it by midnight, so we'll get to work on that as soon as we know what the decision is.

So, that's what's ahead of us, so

1	with that, I'll tee up my motion to go into
2	executive session and ask for a second.
3	MEMBER GILL: Second.
4	CHAIR THOMPSON: All in favor?
5	(Chorus of aye.)
6	CHAIR THOMPSON: All right, well,
7	thank you, everybody, for joining us. We'll be
8	back at 1:00 p.m. and let you know what we
9	think.
10	(Whereupon, the above-entitled
11	matter went off the record at 11:47 a.m. and
12	resumed at 1:06 p.m.)
13	CHAIR THOMPSON: We've been in
14	executive session and step one is to move to
15	resume the public meeting. Our counsel advises
16	me to so move. Do I have a second?
17	MEMBER GILL: Second.
18	CHAIR THOMPSON: All in favor?
19	(Chorus of aye.)
20	CHAIR THOMPSON: And, as the record
21	obviously reflects, my fellow Board members,

well, so we have a quorum to resume this public meeting following our executive session.

Thank you, everybody, for joining us again. I'm just going to repeat what I started, which is, you know, we have really tried and succeeded in being fair and impartial as we approached this issue.

We, you know, continue to have the utmost respect for the challenger and candidate, Councilmember McDuffie and Mr. Spiva. You know, we thank them both and their counsel for participating.

With that, I have a motion to make, and my motion is to grant the challenge made by Mr. Spiva and deny the corresponding motion to dismiss by the challenger, which would include denial of the procedural arguments made in the surreply, and before I ask for a second, I'll provide some comment.

My main comment is that when I read the statute and question at 1-301.83, which is incorporated in the charter itself, I read it to

require more than a candidate being a member in good standing of the Bar and an employee of the District of Columbia. It's got to include something more than that, namely that person must be actively engaged as an attorney.

And this, I think, is set forth rather succinctly in the reply in opposition to the respondent's motion to dismiss that the challenger filed on April 11, and I'll just read the language there that really is kind of at the core of my own reasoning.

Reading the current statute to cover all D.C. Bar members who are employed by the District of Columbia government in any role whatsoever renders the phrase, quote, actively engaged as an attorney, unquote, superfluous.

I'm skipping ahead a little bit.

While an attorney in practice, a judge, or a professor of law all must hold law degrees and apply their legal skills and experience to perform their daily work out of necessity, the same is not true for all District of Columbia

1 government employees, unless, of course, they 2 are employed as attorneys in positions where active D.C. Bar membership is a prerequisite. 3 The only interpretation that gives 4 meaning to all of the words of the statute and 5 reads them as a cohesive whole is to read 6 7 Subsection (d) as applying only to attorneys 8 employed as attorneys in roles where D.C. Bar 9 membership is a prerequisite. The position of D.C. Councilmember, 10 11 while it certainly helps to be an attorney, is not one that one is necessarily an attorney, 12 13 does not have to be an attorney. 14 And for the reasons expressed in the arguments made by the challenger, I'm persuaded 15 16 that the candidate does not meet the qualifying 17 language of the statute, specifically Subsection 18 (5)(d). 19 And with that, I'd ask for a second 20 to the motion itself? 21 MEMBER GILL: Second. And, Mike Gill, do 22 CHAIR THOMPSON:

you have any comments you would like to make yourself?

MEMBER GILL: I agree with the rationale as is stated, that it gets -- it could not have been the case that we were expected to get into every gray area imaginable in terms of what actively engaged means. I read it just as its face, actively engaged as an attorney.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, and Karyn Greenfield, any comments on your end?

MEMBER GREENFIELD: No, I don't have any comments. I concur with your rationale and what Mike said.

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, before I call the vote, anything, Terri, else we need to put in the record?

MS. STROUD: I do not think that there's anything else we need to put in the record. I would just ask when -- so I just want to, you know, to confirm for the public that the Board is today announcing its determination on the record and the order will issue at your --

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay.

MS. STROUD: -- at your --

CHAIR THOMPSON: Well, let me call the vote first. The motion is made and seconded to grant the challenge made by Mr. Spiva to deny the motion to dismiss, including denial of the procedural arguments made in the surreply brief. Having been seconded, all in favor of the motion?

(Chorus of aye.)

CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay, for the record, that's three of the three Board members in favor of the motion. What we're going to do with the rest of the day and probably into the evening is draft and work on a written opinion.

We'd like to get that out today, and I don't think we're required to get it out today. We've issued a ruling within the time frame required by the statute. The public now knows that ruling.

We plan to issue a written ruling that will set forth our reasoning, and I would

say when that written ruling comes out, it is 1 2 our ruling notwithstanding, you know, comments or questions that were posed during this oral 3 argument period, that that written ruling will 4 supersede and stand as the opinion of the Board. 5 And we're going to work on it 6 7 throughout the afternoon, probably into the 8 evening, and hopefully we get it out this 9 evening because we'd like everyone to see it --(Audio interference.) 10 11 CHAIR THOMPSON: -- and that's our 12 plan, and the minutes will reflect our ruling, 13 and I think, with that, I would move we adjourn. 14 All right, second to adjourn? They're muted. 15 MS. STROUD: 16 CHAIR THOMPSON: Oh, we go -- oh, 17 hold on. We got to -- they were force-muted. 18 MEMBER GREENFIELD: Yeah, I was 19 force-muted. Yeah, I think Terri was explaining 20 something, but maybe not. That's already been 21 You were starting to say something, 22 Terri, before we took a vote?

1	MS. STROUD: I just wanted to make
2	it clear that the Board was, during this
3	hearing, announcing its determination with
4	respect to the matter on the record
5	MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay.
6	MS. STROUD: and that the written
7	order will follow, but this means that we have
8	timely resolved the matter
9	CHAIR THOMPSON: Okay.
10	MS. STROUD: on the record.
11	MEMBER GILL: I second the motion
12	for adjournment.
13	CHAIR THOMPSON: All right, all in
14	favor?
15	(Chorus of aye.)
16	CHAIR THOMPSON: All right, thank
17	you, everybody.
18	(Whereupon, the above-entitled
19	matter went off the record at 1:14 p.m.)
20	
21	
22	

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This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Special Board Meeting

Before: DCBOE

Date: 04-18-22

Place: teleconference

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Court Reporter

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