

**OFFICE OF INTERNAL AUDIT AND ETHICS**  
**Ethics Investigation Report**  
**August 3, 2023**

**Case Number:** 2023-1-63

**Date Filed:** April 26, 2023

**Complainant:** Confidential

**Respondent:** Jeremy Wilson

**I. ALLEGATION**

The above-named respondent, Jeremy Wilson formally appointed as Governmental Affairs Liaison and as a member of the Cherokee Medical LLC Board, violated Cherokee Code Section 117-45 Standards of Ethical Conduct when he attempted to solicit gratuities and favors from a potential contractor of the EBCI. The allegation is based on the following:

- Sovereign Solutions Carolina submitted a proposal in response to Kituwah LLC's RFQ seeking to qualify and contract with a firm to manage and consult with Kituwah LLC on its cannabis initiative. (November 8, 2021)
- Respondent sent the following text message to an associate of Sovereign Solutions Carolina "Hey brother. Just wrapping up donations for my thanksgiving box to feed families project. I'll be ending donations today. Anything is appreciated. Hi I'd appreciate it if you would share or donate to my GoFundMe. <https://gofund.me/6550c8e3>" (November 19, 2021)
- The respondent was appointed to the Cherokee Medical LLC Board. (March 3, 2022, resolution 200 (2022))
- A formal term sheet between Qualla LLC and Sovereign Solutions Carolina was completed and executed. (April 1, 2022)
- Respondent sent the following text message to the Principal of Sovereign Solutions Carolina "Safe travels home bro. Thanks again for the help. Got some debt paid down. Much appreciated." "Means a lot man. Been pretty tough lately. Just know you'll get your money's worth out of me. See you in Vegas." (May 12, 2022)
- Respondent sent the following text message to an associate of Sovereign Solutions Carolina "Just letting you know Victoria and I are in Vegas now. Just landed. Looking forward to catching up again. On a side note, do you know anyone who has the hookup to Bruno Mars concert this weekend? If not that's fine." (May 20, 2022)
- Respondent sent the following text message to the Principal of Sovereign Solutions Carolina "Hey bro. Hate to ask again, but just need to know if the financial assistance is still in play?" "Also, I really don't mind paying you back through profits made from working with your team down the road. I don't use people. Just in need of help. It's now effecting my relationship." (June 4, 2022)
- Respondent sent the following text message to the Principal of Sovereign Solutions Carolina "Will we get a chance to discuss this financial thing and Victoria's opportunity at some point?" "That's good, sorry I keep asking on the financial stuff. I really am in a tough spot, and just wanting some peace of mind." (June 15, 2022)
- A formal management agreement between Qualla LLC and Sovereign Solutions Carolina was executed. (June 16, 2022)

- The respondent resigns from the Qualla LLC Board with the intention of becoming the General Manager for Qualla LLC. (June 24, 2022)
- The respondent sent a text message to the Principal of Sovereign Solutions Carolina with his banking information. (July 15, 2022)
- Sovereign Solutions Carolina requested a meeting with the Chief, T.W Saunooke and Albert Rose, to discuss their concerns about the respondent's conduct. (August 2, 2022)
- The Chief terminated the respondent's appointment as Governmental Affairs Liaison. (August 3, 2022)

## II. RELEVANT CHEROKEE CODE SECTIONS

### Section 117-45.1(a) Definitions

“(1) *Tribal officials*. Any person who is:

- a. A Tribal officer as defined in Section 1 of the Charter and Governing Document;”
- b. A member of Cherokee School Board as defined in C.C Section 115-8;”
- c. Serving as a member of an authority, board, committee, or commission, appointed by Tribal Council, the Executive Committee or Principal Chief, and who is subject to removal by the appointing authority;”
- d. Appointed by Tribal Council or the Executive Committee or Principal Chief, and who is subject to removal by the appointing authority, to carry out actions, provide guidance, or assistance to the Tribal Council, the Executive Committee or to a member of the Executive Committee.”

### Section 117-45.3

“(b) No Tribal Official or any member of their immediate family shall solicit or accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors or subcontractors who are contracting to perform services or sell goods or property to the Tribe or a Tribal program.”

### Section 117-45.3(d) Code of Ethics

“(1) Tribal officials of the EBCI shall treat service to the EBCI as a sacred public trust with fiduciary responsibility to the EBCI, which requires upholding and acting in accordance with the laws of the EBCI and engaging in the proper governance of the EBCI in a manner, which is placed above personal and private gain.”

“(2) Tribal officials of the EBCI shall not allow financial interests to conflict with the conscientious performance of obligations inherent in fulfilling the duties and responsibilities associated with their respective offices.”

“(3) Tribal officials of the EBCI shall protect and conserve Tribal resources and ensure the appropriate use of Tribal resources falling under the scope of the office of the Tribal official.”

“(5) Tribal officials of the EBCI shall not use prestige of the office to advance personal interests of others or themselves.”

“(15) Tribal officials shall maintain or enhance the honesty and integrity of their respective offices; and safeguard the reputation of the EBCI as a whole.”

### **III. INVESTIGATION PROCESS**

An initial complaint was received on January 25, 2023. The complaint was deferred due to other administrative and investigative processes. After the conclusion of those processes, the complaint was assigned to the ethics staff on April 26, 2023. The complainant provided a detailed account of the events that transpired from November 2021 to August 2022.

The complaint was determined to be complete and within the jurisdiction of the Office of Internal Audit and Ethics. A copy of the complaint was sent to the respondent Mr. Wilson on April 27, 2023. On May 16, 2023, Mr. Wilson requested an extension to submit his written response. An extension was granted until May 25, 2023. Mr. Wilson failed to submit a response to the complaint.

The Ethics Review Committee reviewed the complaint in a special-called meeting, on June 2, 2023. The Committee approved for ethics staff to proceed with an investigation. (See Resolution ERC 23-01)

Interviews were conducted on June 14, 2023, and June 26, 2023, with Mr. Wilson and witness 1, respectively. These interviews were conducted to obtain more information in understanding the events as stated in the complaint. Relevant documents and text messages received were also reviewed.

### **IV. FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The respondent was a Tribal Official at the time of the incident as defined in Cherokee Code Section 117-45.1(c) and 117-45.1(d).
2. The respondent is an enrolled member of the EBCI.
3. The complainant is an enrolled member of the EBCI.
4. The respondent served as the Governmental Affairs Liaison.
5. The respondent served on the Cherokee Medical LLC Board (now known as Qualla Enterprises LLC).
6. Sovereign Solutions Carolina was a contractor or potential contractor of the EBCI.
7. The respondent confirmed the text messages provided were his.

## V. ANALYSIS

The complaint alleges the respondent violated 6 sections of Cherokee Code Section 117-45.3. An analysis is outlined below.

***It is alleged that the respondent or a member of their immediate family solicited or accepted gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors or subcontractors who are contracting to perform services or sell goods or property to the Tribe or a Tribal program. (Section 117-45.3(b))***

Violation. There is sufficient evidence to substantiate that Mr. Wilson while serving as the Governmental Affairs Liaison and as a member of the Cherokee Medical LLC Board solicited or accepted gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors or subcontractors who were contracting to perform services or sell goods or property to the Tribe or a Tribal program.

Mr. Wilson's text messages with potential contractors or contractors of the EBCI indicate he was attempting to solicit favors and possibly receive money from them. On June 4, 2022, Mr. Wilson messaged an associate of Sovereign Solutions Carolina and stated, "Hey bro. Hate to ask again, but just need to know if the financial assistance is still in play?" Fourteen minutes later Mr. Wilson sends another text message and states "Also, I really don't mind paying you back through any profits made from working with your team down the road. I don't use people. Just in need of help. It's now effecting my relationship." Mr. Wilson provided his banking information in a text message to the Principal of Sovereign Solutions Carolina on July 15, 2022. The Principal of Sovereign Solutions Carolina stated he gave Mr. Wilson \$4,000 in cash. Mr. Wilson did not deny receiving any gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from Sovereign Solutions Carolina.

***It is alleged that the respondent failed to treat service to the EBCI as a sacred public trust with fiduciary responsibility to the EBCI, which requires upholding and acting in accordance with the laws of the EBCI and engaging in the proper governance of the EBCI in a manner, which is placed above personal and private gain. (Section 117-45.3(d)(1))***

Violation. There is sufficient evidence to substantiate that Mr. Wilson's actions between November 2021 and August 2022, failed to treat service to the EBCI as a sacred public trust with fiduciary responsibility to the EBCI, which requires upholding and acting in accordance with the laws of the EBCI and engaging in the proper governance of the EBCI in a manner, which is placed above personal and private gain.

Mr. Wilson appears to indicate he will give the vendors favorable treatment and work for their interest when he is soliciting money and favors from them. Clearly stating in one text exchange "Just know you'll get your moneys worth out of me." In another text exchange he states "Also, I really don't mind paying you back through any profits made from working

with your team down the road, I don't use people. Just in need of help. It's now effecting my relationship."

***It is alleged that the respondent allowed financial interests to conflict with the conscientious performance of obligations inherent in fulfilling the duties and responsibilities associated with their respective office. (Section 117-45.3(d)(2))***

Dismissed. There is not sufficient evidence to support this allegation.

***It is alleged that the respondent failed to protect, conserve, and/or ensure the appropriate use of Tribal Resources. (Section 117-45.3(d)(3))***

Dismissed. There is not sufficient evidence to support this allegation.

***It is alleged that the respondent used the prestige of the office to advance personal interests of others or themselves. (Section 117-45.3(d)(5))***

Violation. There is sufficient evidence to substantiate that Mr. Wilson's actions used the prestige of the office to advance his own personal interests.

Mr. Wilson's text message to a contractor that they would "get their money's worth out of me" and the promise to pay back money from future profits from working together show that Mr. Wilson's relationship with these contractors went far beyond the boundaries set forward in the Standards of Ethical Conduct given his position on the Cherokee Medical LLC board and appointment as Governmental Affairs Liaison.

***It is alleged that the respondent failed to maintain or enhance the honesty and integrity of his respective office; and safeguard the reputation of the EBCI as a whole. (Section 117-45.3(d)(15))***

Violation. There is sufficient evidence to substantiate that Mr. Wilson's actions did not safeguard the reputation of the Governmental Affairs Liaison, the Cherokee Medical LLC Board, or the EBCI as a whole.

Mr. Wilson's actions were detrimental to the integrity and reputation of the EBCI. Vendors indicated it became very uncomfortable coming to Cherokee, often resorting to "dressing down" in order to avoid Mr. Wilson's solicitation for funds and favors. Furthermore, they reported Mr. Wilson would regularly inquire about someone's "net worth."

## **VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee finds that there are Ethics Code Violations of Sections ***117-45.3(b)***, ***117-45.3(d)(1)***, ***117-45.3(d)(5)***, and ***117-45.3(d)(15)***, for the reasons set forth in the report. The Audit and Ethics Committee will assess a fine and further action if needed. This report will also be forwarded to the Executive Office, Attorney General, and Tribal Council.

Report prepared and submitted by:

Jashuna Parker  
Case Manager/Lead Investigator

08/04/2023  
Date

## VII. REVIEW BY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

- ☒ Affirm ethics violation determination
  - ☒ Issue this report to complainant and respondent as final decision
  - ☐ Issue revised report to complainant and respondent as final decision
- ☐ Deny ethics violation determination
  - ☐ Request further investigation prior to further decision by the committee
  - ☐ Request hearing prior to further decision by the committee
- ☐ Affirm no ethics violation determination
  - ☐ Dismiss complaint with issuance of this report to complainant and respondent as the final decision
  - ☐ Dismiss complaint, with issuance of revised report to complainant and respondent
- ☐ Deny no ethics violation determination
  - ☐ Request further investigation prior to further decision by the committee
  - ☐ Request hearing prior to further decision by the committee

## VIII. RECOMMENDED VIOLATION CONSEQUENCES BY THE ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Issue a fine in the amount of \$4,000 & recommend Jeremy Wilson not be appointed to any position for a period of two years.

I hereby certify that the above decision was approved by majority of voting members of the Ethics Review Committee.

Jashuna Parker  
Ethics Review Committee Chair

08/04/2023  
Date



**IX. FINAL DECISION BY AUDIT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

- ☐ Affirm decision and recommendation of the Ethics Review Committee as final
- ☐ Request further investigation prior to decision
- ☐ Overturn decision and recommendation of the Ethics Review Committee in part as described below
- ☐ Overturn decision and recommendation of the Ethics Review Committee and dismiss the complaint in its entirety
- ☒ Other as described below

Affirm the decision of the Ethics Review Committee on Code of Ethics violations and issue a fine in the amount of \$4,000.

Amend the recommendation for appointment to state "Jeremy Wilson will not be appointed to any position for a period five years."

**I hereby certify that the above decision was approved by the majority of voting members of the Audit and Ethics Committee.**

*Lois Lambert*  
**Audit and Ethics Committee Chair**

8/11/23  
**Date**