



# FACT

FOUNDATION FOR  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
AND CIVIC TRUST

October 28, 2024

Board of Ethics  
Village of Hempstead  
9 James A. Garner Way  
Hempstead, New York 11550

Board of Ethics  
Town of Hempstead  
One Washington Street  
Hempstead, NY 11550

Email: [BoardofEthics@hempsteadny.gov](mailto:BoardofEthics@hempsteadny.gov)

RE: Abuse of Official Government Resources

Dear Ethics Board Members,

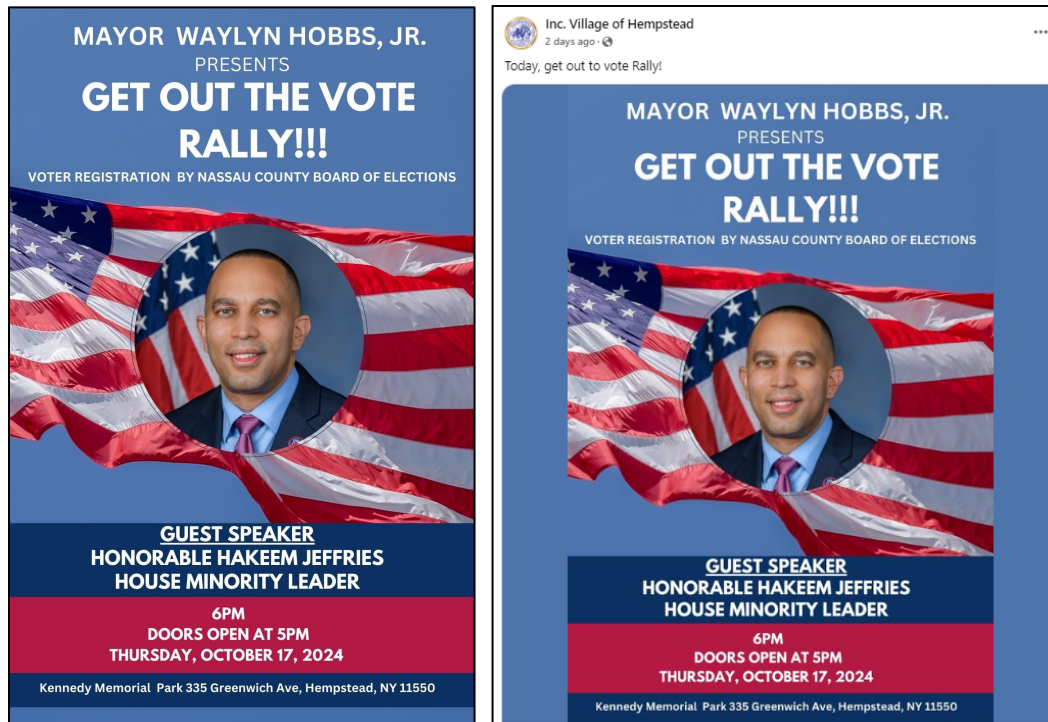
The Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust (FACT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting accountability, ethics, and transparency in government and civic arenas. On October 17, 2024, the Village of Hempstead held a campaign rally for Democrats and a Democrat candidate for Congress, Laura Gillen, that reportedly was promoted using government resources, held on public property, staffed by government employees, and attended by government officials. Other members of her political party appeared alongside Gillen at the event, urging attendees to vote for her from behind a podium that had her campaign sign posted on it. A New York State Democrats banner was displayed and supporters carried signage for Gillen. The government's involvement in this campaign rally is an unethical government endorsement of a candidate and an impermissible use of government resources for political purposes. We request the ethics boards investigate and hold any government officials and employees involved accountable.

**Facts.** On October 17, 2024, Hempstead Village Mayor Waylyn Hobbs hosted what he and the Village's promotional materials called a "Get Out the Vote Rally"<sup>1</sup> at Kennedy Memorial

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Campanile, *Long Island Village Used Government Accounts to Push Event That Was A Rally for Democrats In Disguise: 'Voters Deserve Better'*, New York Post (Oct. 20, 2024, 5:30 pm ET), <https://nypost.com/2024/10/20/us-news/long-island-village-used-government-accounts-to-push-event-that-was-a-rally-for-democrats-in-disguise/>.

Park, a property owned by the Village of Hempstead.<sup>2</sup> Reportedly, both the Village and County Board of Elections provided staff to manage the event.<sup>3</sup> The following images are some of the Village's posts promoting the event from its website (left) and Facebook page (right):<sup>4</sup>



Despite its apolitical marketing, this was a partisan, political event both as it was planned and as it transpired. Before the event, a news organization described it as a political rally:

“With less than three weeks until Election Day, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries will rally with Democratic candidate Laura Gillen Thursday in New York’s 4th Congressional District, Spectrum News NY1 has learned.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy Memorial Park is owned by the Village of Hempstead. Village of Hempstead, *Facilities*, [www.villageofhempstead.org](https://www.villageofhempstead.org/facilities/facility/details/Kennedy-Memorial-Park-1), <https://www.villageofhempstead.org/facilities/facility/details/Kennedy-Memorial-Park-1> (last visited accessed Oct. 24, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Carl Campanile, *Long Island Village Used Government Accounts to Push Event That Was A Rally for Democrats In Disguise: 'Voters Deserve Better'*, New York Post (Oct. 20, 2024, 5:30 pm ET).

<sup>4</sup> Village of Hempstead, *Get out to Vote Rally!*, [www.villageofhempstead.org](https://www.villageofhempstead.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=441&ARC=831), <https://www.villageofhempstead.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=441&ARC=831> (last accessed Oct. 24, 2024); Village of Hempstead, Facebook (Oct. 17, 2024), <https://www.facebook.com/villageofhempstead/posts/pfbid0wtGKQ5yS3iyprMnimkFWhuLQeiEUBsLQK7CtYKr81kjhDY2DMHibaySTjFHGm44LI?rdid=nOfH34CiaE5IoZ0Q>.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Frey, *Exclusive: Jeffries to rally on Long Island with Dem congressional candidate Laura Gillen*, Spectrum News (Oct. 16, 2024, 7:00 AM EST), <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2024/10/16/scoop--jeffries-to-rally-on-long-island-with-dem-congressional-candidate-laura-gillen/>.

In an Instagram post by Hempstead Trustee Noah Burroughs, the event was also explicitly billed as a “Campaign Rally” organized by The New York State Democratic Party.<sup>6</sup>



The content of the event also made it evident it was a political rally. From Newsday:

“House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries stumped Thursday night for Democratic congressional candidate Laura Gillen in Hempstead, less than three weeks before Election Day. Jeffries (D-Brooklyn) introduced Gillen, 55, of Rockville Centre.”<sup>7</sup>

In his remarks, Jeffries explicitly electioneered:

“‘Are you ready to elect Democrats up and down the ballot!’ Jeffries said at the start of a 20-minute speech. ‘Are you ready to elect Laura Gillen to Congress! Are you ready to help us take control of the House of Representatives!’”<sup>8</sup>

His remarks continued to be political:

“‘It’s incredibly important in terms of the direction of this country, that Democrats take back control of the House of Representatives,’ Jeffries, flanked by state

<sup>6</sup> Noah Burroughs (@nb193), Instagram (Oct. 16, 2024), <https://www.instagram.com/nb193/p/DBMd5wlvKvH/>.

<sup>7</sup> John Asbury, *Rep. Hakeem Jeffries campaigns for Laura Gillen weeks before Election Day*, Newsday (Oct. 17, 2024), available at: <https://archive.is/z57MJ#selection-453.0-453.73>.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Campanile, *Long Island Village Used Government Accounts to Push Event That Was A Rally for Democrats In Disguise: ‘Voters Deserve Better’*, New York Post (Oct. 20, 2024, 5:30 pm ET).

Democratic party leader Jay Jacobs and state Democratic candidates that include Siela Bynoe and Noah Burroughs, said.”<sup>9</sup>

A New York State Democrats banner was displayed, and supporters carried signs for Gillen.<sup>10</sup> The event speakers, including Gillen and Jeffries spoke at a podium with Gillen’s campaign branding.<sup>11</sup>



After the event, Gillen herself confirmed the political nature of the event by stating “together we rallied with hundreds of supporters.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Asbury, *Rep. Hakeem Jeffries campaigns for Laura Gillen weeks before Election Day*, Newsday (Oct. 17, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> Carl Campanile, *Long Island Village Used Government Accounts to Push Event That Was A Rally for Democrats In Disguise: ‘Voters Deserve Better’*, New York Post (Oct. 20, 2024, 5:30 pm ET).

<sup>11</sup> Laura Gillen (@LauraAGillen), Twitter (Oct. 18, 2024), <https://x.com/lauraagillen/status/1847257852924084402?s=46&t=vpqVQrSYF8Uc2LihvOm3jA>; John Asbury, *Rep. Hakeem Jeffries Campaigns for Laura Gillen Weeks Before Election Day*, Newsday (Oct. 17, 2024).

<sup>12</sup> Laura Gillen (@LauraAGillen), Twitter (Oct. 18, 2024), <https://x.com/lauraagillen/status/1847257852924084402?s=46>.



Later, when asked about the event by the New York Post, Mayor Hobbs “initially said ‘it’s not true’ when asked about Hempstead’s use of government resources to promote the event. He said the rally was paid for with ‘private funds.’ But he declined comment and hung up when told the Gillen-Democratic Party rally was promoted across the village’s websites. The Gillen campaign declined comment.”<sup>13</sup> However, Nassau County Democratic leader and state party chairman, Jay Jacobs said the rally “was jointly paid for by the Gillen campaign and the county party.”<sup>14</sup>

**Law.** One foundational ethical principle applicable to public employees is that they cannot use government resources, including their own work time, for political purposes. Safeguarding government resources from political ends ensures that taxpayer-funds are used only for official business and provides for a non-political work environment for government employees. This important rule is embodied in both the Village of Hempstead and Town of Hempstead’s respective ethics codes.

The Village of Hempstead’s Ethics Code requires that employees only perform public work, specifically performing any outside work or causing other employees to perform outside work is forbidden.<sup>15</sup> The code states:

“No officer or employee of the Village shall direct or cause any officer or employee of the Village to do or perform any service or work outside of public work or employment, or accept any such service or work, nor shall any officer or

<sup>13</sup> Carl Campanile, *Long Island Village Used Government Accounts to Push Event That Was A Rally for Democrats In Disguise: ‘Voters Deserve Better’*, New York Post (Oct. 20, 2024, 5:30 pm ET).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Village of Hempstead, [Code Of Ethics](#), § 9-2, June 20, 2023.

employee of the Village offer to or perform any such service or work for such officer or employee.”<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, Village property is also protected and can be used only for official work:

“Use of Village property. No officer or employee of the Village shall request or permit the use of Village-owned vehicles, equipment, materials or property for personal convenience or profit. Only when such vehicles, equipment, materials or property are provided as Village policy and by order of the Village administration for the use of such officer or employee may they be used and then only in the conduct of official business.”<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, the Town of Hempstead Ethics Code provides that town resources can only be used for lawful town purposes and campaign purposes are strictly forbidden.<sup>18</sup> The code states:

- A. Town resources shall be used only for lawful Town purposes. Town resources include, but are not limited to, Town personnel, compensated time, money, vehicles, equipment, letterhead, postage, printing services, materials, supplies or other property.
- B. No Town officer or employee shall use or permit the use of Town resources for personal or private purposes . . .
- C. Without limitation of the foregoing, no Town officer or employee shall use Town resources for the following purposes: (1) The sale or purchase of tickets to political events; (2) The solicitation of membership or participation in a political party, committee or club; (3) The solicitation of a contribution to an election campaign, political party, committee or club, or a political action committee; or (4)The production or distribution of campaign materials or literature.<sup>19</sup>

New York law also prohibits local, state, or federal candidates or elected officials appearing in or paying for, in whole or part, advertisements with government funds.<sup>20</sup>

**Analysis.** As absurd as it sounds, on October 17, 2024, the Village of Hempstead held a campaign rally for a local candidate just weeks before the election. The rally was planned and reported on as being a political one beforehand. In spite of its political nature, the Village

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<sup>16</sup> *Id.* § 9-4 M.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* § 9-4 N.

<sup>18</sup> [Town Of Hempstead Code](#), § 38-13, Aug. 6, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> NY Pub. Officers Law § 73-B.

promoted the rally with government resources, including employee time, and government websites and social media accounts. The rally was held on government property, hosted by the Mayor, staffed by government employees, and attended by government officials. Every description of the rally was that of a campaign one, a New York State Democrats banner was on display, supporters carried signs for Laura Gillen (a Democratic candidate for office), and the podium had a Gillen campaign sign attached to the front of it. Finally, the attendees and their speeches confirm without a doubt that it was a campaign rally, specifically other members of her political party appeared alongside Gillen at the event and urged attendees to vote for Gillen and other Democrats.

Local, state, and federal laws all prohibit the use of government resources for political activity. It is a foundational ethical principal and one that must be strictly enforced. Failure to do so politicizes government functions and erodes the public's trust in a fair and impartial government. Taxpayer-funds are not to be used for political campaigns and this type of waste and abuse cannot be tolerated. While some candidates and party officials now want to claim they paid for the event, this does not excuse the government's involvement or the use of taxpayer-funded resources. It is clear that government resources were used for the event (at a minimum government employees promoted it on the official website and social media accounts) and there was government endorsement of a political event. It should alarm both Town and Village ethics officials that such a blatant violation of public trust could occur on their watch. We ask both ethics boards to investigate and hold accountable anyone who used government resources for political purposes.

Sincerely,

/s/Kendra Arnold

Kendra Arnold  
Executive Director, Foundation for Accountability & Civic Trust