

Spring 2022 Employee Assembly Election
Candidate Challenge Form

Candidate Name: Alexis Miller	NetID: adm263
Challenger Name: Isaac Belenkiy	NetID: ib269

Instructions

Please attach a typewritten document that includes the reason(s) for your challenge. Identify any facts related to the election rules you identified above and explain how you believe the violation has altered the fairness of the election. You may submit digital evidence (such as photographs) to assembly@cornell.edu after submitting this form. We do not accept hand-written attachments. Recognizing that staff may be working in different situations (in person, hybrid or remote) due to ongoing Covid-related restrictions, this form must be turned in to the Office of the Assemblies via email to assembly@cornell.edu by the challenger by **Friday, April 29, 2022 by 2:00pm EST**.

Certification

I, the filer of this challenge, attest by my signature below that the information I have provided is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I certify that I have read and understand the election rules, available on the Election webpage, and I acknowledge my confidentiality obligations as a party to this challenge, reprinted here:

"Members of the committee and parties to a challenge may not share the contents of challenges, evidence, or decisions submitted to or received from the committee, except when explicitly permitted by these rules or by the committee. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information may result in disqualification."

Signature of Challenger: /s/ Isaac Belenkiy Date 9-28-2022

To whom it may concern,

I am submitting this document using this challenge form attached because I could not find an updated challenge form on the assembly page for this election. I googled “Cornell Challenge Form” and used the cover page which came up.

I am reaching out because Alexis Miller’s promise of a \$25 gift card to one random student from a pool of students that have submitted “Cornell Comments” through her candidate website (<https://alexisfortrustee.squarespace.com/>). I learned about this when I saw a poster advertising Alexis’s candidacy. I have attached a photo of this poster here. I went to Alexis’s website and scrolled down to see the option to submit comments about Cornell and suggestions for changes that could enhance the student experience. The website says that students submitting a comment through the website will also enter a “drawing” and will have the chance to win a \$25 American Express Gift Card. I’ve attached a screenshot of that here as well.

I am generally suspicious of any exchange involving money for democratic engagement, so I looked at the CCCET Procedures. I think that this violates V(5) by creating a coercive environment for students. The rule reads: “Throughout both the petition process and the campaigning process, each petitioner/candidate shall not – and shall not direct or permit any of their supporters to – create a coercive or intimidating environment for other candidates, students, or employees. Examples of coercive or intimidating behavior include, but are not limited to, (a) interfering or interacting with persons clearly in the process of voting; (b) offering any promise, item, or service in exchange for any vote; (c) conditioning membership in any group, or the receipt of any item or service, on a person’s vote; and/or (d) requesting or requiring proof from any person evidencing the candidate for whom they voted. ”

Offering money is inherently coercive as it plays into the financial needs of students to get them to visit and engage with the website, especially by putting the Cornell Comment submission box all the way on the bottom of the page. More website visits, longer website view times, and the promise of money create unnatural student engagement with candidate websites. This type of influence will make otherwise impartial students more likely to vote for Alexis based on that potential to win the \$25 gift card. Importantly, neither the website nor poster clarify how the drawing will be conducted. There is no promise that a winner will be selected randomly. I think it’s fair to assume, and many students would infer, that better comments might translate to a better chance of winning the “drawing.” Students may believe that by telling Alexis they are voting for her and have submitted a comment, they have a higher chance of winning the drawing. In any event, candidates should not be able to lure voters to their campaign pages or events with the promise of gifts. These aren’t cookies, cupcakes, buttons, hats, or t-shirts. This gift is not easily taken by anyone just passing by on Ho Plaza -- it pays students to engage with the candidate in a way that inherently biases the voter towards that candidate. A \$25 gift card is the functional equivalent of cash. Nobody should ever feel like they have a cash incentive to vote.

At its core, this is vote buying. It is a fact at least one student will receive a \$25 gift card for their vote. Even if the advertisement doesn’t explicitly condition receipt of the gift card on a vote, students will logically infer that their vote is being purchased. Even students who don’t feel that their vote has been purchased, will inevitably feel some sort of social coercion from the

candidate because they have received money (or believe that they will receive money at some point after the election) from one candidate while receiving nothing from the others. This effect will only be amplified between students that know each other, as well as students within the same school or program.

Vote buying also creates a coercive environment for other candidates because they will feel obligated to engage in voter patronage as well. When an election stops being a marketplace of ideas and becomes a casino, everybody is incented to purchase gifts to attract their own voters. This form of gift-giving corrupts the election at a fundamental level. Suddenly, every candidate must divert school funds, intended to promote free speech and a fair election process, to gift buying. With their limited campaign funding depleted by gift-giving, candidates will have less money to spend on literature and media designed to spread their message. Our elections will devolve into popularity contests, driven by word of mouth advertising and prizes.

I am also worried about allowing such practices to continue in future elections. If this is allowed under our rules, I don't see what's stopping candidates from offering money (or the chance to participate in a "drawing" leading to money) in exchange for student sign-ups on a list-serv, social media engagement, or attendance at candidate events. Can candidates pay students simply for voting, even if they do not specify which candidate to vote for? More importantly, could they require that members of a "drawing" prove that they voted? None of these things should be bought. They must be earned.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my objection. I am not an expert on the CCCET guidelines and this is my first objection, so I ask that you interpret the allegations that I have made in this letter liberally. If you have any questions about the information or arguments contained in this letter or any of the attached documents, please reach out to me by phone or email.

Regards,
Isaac Belenkiy

HEY, CORNELL GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS!

Vote for Cornell University's Next
Student-Elect Trustee



ALEXIS MILLER
SC Johnson School of Management



Learn More, Scan, and Share

Candidate Priorities

ACCESS

- Increase Financial Aid
- International Student Support
- Expand Transportation Services
- Funded Professional Development

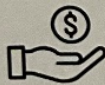
WELLNESS

- Accessible Learning
- Sexual Assault Prevention
- Disability/Mental Health Services

EQUITY

- Decolonize Curriculums
- Inclusion For BIPOC & LGBTQ+
- Implement Anti-Racism Frameworks

Leadership Experience



Impact Fund Manager



Attorney



Community Organizer

VOTE TODAY!

MONDAY 9/26 - WEDNESDAY 9/28

Win a \$25 AMEX Gift Card!

<https://qrco.de/alexis4trustee>

2:44 ↶



Giving Back



Thank you for taking the time to learn about my candidacy for Trustee. To help me understand your concerns, tell me what changes Cornell should consider to enhance the student experience. All “Cornell Comments” may be entered here. Students who submit a comment will be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Amex Gift Card!



alexisfortrustee.squarespace.com