



Ojibwe Forests Rally, 28-29 Aug 2026

Stewards Decision 5 – Car 522 Protest

From: Jason Smith, Justin Pritchard, Curt Faigle

Date: 3 September 2026

To: Driver and Co-driver of car 522

Time: 15:30 CDT

A Protest in compliance with GCR 9.2 was accepted by the Stewards (submitted in writing signed by the competitor, within the required time frame and with the stipulated protest fee).

The ARA Chief Steward J.B. Niday formed a Panel of Stewards per GCR 9.10 comprised of:

- ARA President and Protest Hearing Chair; Jason Smith
- ARA Sr. Steward; Justin Pritchard
- Ojibwe Forests Rally Event Steward; Curt Faigle
- Note: Ojibwe Forests Rally Sr. Steward, Alan Perry, recused himself as a key witness

This Protest Decision documents the findings and the decision of the Panel of Stewards following an online Protest Hearing held on Wednesday 2 September 2026 at 17:30 CDT in compliance with GCR 9.5.

Present at this meeting prior to its closing for Steward-only deliberations were:

- The Panel of Stewards listed above
- The Clerk of the Course Jonathan Atkins
- The Deputy Clerk of the Course Bob Martin
- Observers of the infraction
 - Jack Armstrong
 - Lee Hilliard
 - Beryl Burton
 - Alan Perry (via WhatsApp)
 - Brenda Lewis
- The reporter of the infraction Mark Larson (Deputy CoC)
- The Protester Matt James (Driver of car 522)
- The Service crew of car 522 Wyatt James
- Observer J.B. Niday (ARA Deputy Competition Director)

The Basis of the Organizers' Assessment of the Penalty of Exclusion

After car 522 entered the Regroup control 4A. Sometime after this the service crew of 522 delivered auxiliary lights to the crew of 522 placing them in the trunk of the car. The driver asked control worker Lee Hillard if he could install the lights and was told they indeed could during the transit after TC4B. The crew proceeded to install the lights in the control zone for SS5.

The Stewards and Competition Director interviewed the Driver on Saturday morning, and he readily admitted to installing the lights in the control zone.

RCR 4.12.3 states that “while the vehicles are subject to Parc Fermé rules, any repair, assistance or refuelling is strictly forbidden, under penalty of exclusion.”

Issue to be Determined

The issue before the Panel is whether the facts established by the evidence— specifically, the receipt and installation of the lights while under Parc Fermé conditions—constitute a violation of RCR 4.12.3 as well as the reasonableness of the penalty of exclusion.

The Arguments by the Crew Against the Exclusion Penalty

The driver readily admits to both violations but believes that the penalty is too harsh. The driver stated he was rushed into the Regroup Control so he could not install the lights prior to checking into the control. The service crew state that they believed they received permission both to receive and install the lights. Lee Hillard contends that he gave instructions for when installation would be allowed and that he was unaware that the lights had been delivered by the service crew. The service crew member claims Lee gave him permission to deliver the lights to the car.

The driver contends that there was not sufficient time during the 1-minute transit to install the lights so he installed them in the start control area. He admits that he had not considered taking a lateness penalty by installing the lights during the transit. He also admits that he didn't need the lights for stage 5 and could have installed them during the transit to stage 6. The driver did not have his crew deliver or install the lights at the Refuel Zone, RZ3, where light installation was allowed because he was under the mistaken impression that the 2-minute interval would be reduced and the stages would end before dark.

Decision: The penalty of exclusion is revoked

A penalty of 10 minutes is charged for illegally receiving the auxiliary lights

A penalty of 10 minutes is charged for illegally installing the lights inside a control zone

The protest fee is to be returned

Rationale:

The Panel finds that while two violations occurred, neither is sufficient to warrant the penalty of exclusion. ARA Bulletin 2026-11 was intended to refer decisions of this type to the stewards who, in all likelihood, would have assigned this lesser penalty. The language in RCR 4.12.3 was mistakenly overlooked when Bulletin 2026-11 was approved. The stewards also considered that the CoC could or should have applied RCR 4.1.4 which would have been referred to the stewards.

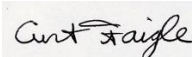
Recommendation to the American Rally Association:

The ARA Competition Director is advised to publish a bulletin that addresses the automatic exclusion in RCR 4.12.3 and diligently seek other such oversights in Bulletin 2026-11.

The right of appeal this decision is set out in General Competition Rules Article 10. Notwithstanding GCR 10.3, the 30-minute time limit for notification of intent to appeal is extended to 24 hours from the time this Protest Decision is published on the Sportity Official Notice Board. To appeal email the Sr. Steward for the event, Alan Perry, at alanp@snowmoose.com







Jason Smith

Justin Pritchard

Curt Faigle