



News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Two Indictments Handed Down in Petition Fraud Case**  
**No prosecution for altering over 1,000 addresses**

CINCINNATI, March 1, 2007 – After seven months of investigation, the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office today handed down felony indictments of two persons for forgery of signatures on petitions that were submitted as part of a failed attempt to challenge the addition of sexual orientation and transgender status to Cincinnati's human rights ordinance last year. Lois Mingo and Precilla Ward, both of Cincinnati, were indicted today. Ms. Ward was indicted on one count of election falsification and two counts of false signature on an election document. Ms. Mingo was indicted on one count of election falsification.

However, the Prosecutor's office failed to indict anyone for altering over 1,000 addresses without voter's permission while the petitions were in the custody of Ohio State Representative Tom Brinkman, who was paid \$40,000 to gather the signatures. In a letter to Timothy Burke, Chair of the Hamilton County Board of Elections, Prosecuting Attorney Joseph Deters acknowledged that in his opinion the alteration of addresses was illegal and may result in criminal prosecution in the future in other cases. Nevertheless, he cited the "belief" of the "committee circulating the petition" that this was permitted, on the advice of the committee's own unnamed attorney, in choosing not to indict at this time.

Attorney Jennifer L. Branch, who first uncovered the forgeries and address changes

and brought this matter to the attention of the Board of Elections, said: “The legal case the committee’s attorney and Prosecutor Deters relied on was written 40 years ago and is from Franklin County. It has nothing to do with creating false addresses - it only allows the committee to fill in obviously missing pieces of an otherwise correct address, such as completing the name of the city after the signer wrote in her street address.”

Ms. Branch went on to say that today’s decision ignored the real extent of the changes made while the petitions were in State Representative Brinkman’s control. “They did not just fill in correct addresses. They changed the identities of voters – that’s fraudulent. We found that someone crossed out the address for a man who lived in Mariemont and wrote in the Hyde Park address of someone with a similar name. We also found someone crossed off the address of a woman in Cleves and wrote in the Cincinnati address of a woman with the same name. By not prosecuting these illegal actions Deters is giving someone a free pass.”

Equality Cincinnati is a non-profit organization working for full equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in the greater Cincinnati region.

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