



## News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Equality Cincinnati Praises Judge Ruehlman**

CINCINNATI, July 23, 2007 – Equality Cincinnati was pleased to hear the public comments that Hamilton County Common Pleas Court Judge Robert Ruehlman had to say in regards to State Rep. Tom Brinkman, Jr.

Brinkman, R-Mount Lookout, was the leader of the group Equal Rights Not Special Rights which were collecting petition signatures to overturn the 2006 ordinance passed by city council to protect all GLBT citizens from discrimination. The group submitted petitions that had only two more names than the minimum number required for the referendum to be placed on the ballot. Citizens to Restore Fairness (CRF) then challenged the petitions and filed a complaint with the Hamilton County Board of Elections. CRF pointed out hundreds of fake signatures including those of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro and Cincinnati Reds owner Bob Castellini. The group, which is lead by anti-porn activist Phil Burrell, then withdrew the petition, but the complaint was forwarded to the prosecutors.

The Hamilton County Prosecutors office determined that campaigns are allowed to strike out information on a petition, but only if it is done” under the direction and by the authority of the signer.” According to Assistant Hamilton County Prosecutor David Stevenson, in court records, Brinkman admitted to changing more the 1000 address on the petitions to make them valid. Stevenson further explained that a lawyer had wrongly advised Brinkman that address could be altered.

Brinkman’s role in the petition drive was presented to a Hamilton County grand jury, which declined to indict him. Out of the same investigation, a grand jury indicted two women on charges of altering petitions. These women worked for Labor Ready, a temporary employment agency hired by Equal Rights Not Special Rights and were paid by the hour and by the signature.

On Wednesday, July 18 these women plead guilty to election falsification. It was at this time Ruehlman called out Brinkman’s involvement and citing him as the “real criminal” in this case.

The Republican judge went further to say, "What he did is terrible, almost defrauding. A layer of foundation of our democracy is voting and free elections. To cheat the voting system, he's a state rep on top of that –" Ruelhman continued on to express his disbelief that Brinkman is still in office, "He should be taken from office. That's wrong. It's terrible. It takes away the right to democracy. It takes away the right for people to decide when you cheat like that." Then the judge continued by stating that the laws need to be looked at and passed to cover situations like this.

Outgoing President of Equality Cincinnati, Gary Wright, who had filed the complaint against Brinkman with the Board of Elections, agreed with Ruelhman's assessment "The big question is why Tom Brinkman, a state representative, did not know better than to change the address of voters in his own district. He has no compunction, no guilt, no admission of responsibility," Wright stated.

Equality Cincinnati praises Judge Ruelhman's public comments. We are pleased and would like to thank Judge Ruelhman for being able to see past party lines and understand the bigger issue here that has been ignored all along.

For more information on Equality Cincinnati please visit our website at [www.equalitycincinnati.com](http://www.equalitycincinnati.com)

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