

News Release

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**OHIO ELECTION COMMISSION FAILS TO PURSUE ALLEGATION OF ILLEGAL
CAMPAIGN PRACTICES BY CITIZEN FOR COMMUNITY VALUES ACTION AND
OTHERS**

Accusation of illegal Campaign Activity Stalled

CINCINNATI, FEBRUARY 23, 2006– On an administrative technicality, The Ohio Election Commission today declined to rule on probable cause in a complaint alleging Citizen's for Community Values Action, and other organizations, solicited anonymous campaign contributions and hid the names of donors, in violation of Ohio election law. The commission needed four votes to either move forward with the complaint or dismiss it. The members present split three to two. The complaint was then released from the commission's jurisdiction without a decision.

Today's hearing was in response to a complaint filed in the aftermath of the fall 2004 campaigns opposing the repeal of the City of Cincinnati's Article XII and supporting the Ohio constitutional amendment on marriage known as Issue 1. These allegations concern the fundraising and disclosure practices of Citizens for Community Values Action and its chairperson Phil Burrell, Equal Right No Special Rights and its chairperson former Cincinnati City Councilman Sam Malone and other organizations that participated in these issue campaigns.

The two complainants in the case are Gary Wright, Chairman of Equality Cincinnati and former Cincinnati Mayor and City Councilwoman Bobbie Sterne. Attorney's for the complainants will be exploring other legal procedures to expose wrong-doing in the two 2004 campaigns in question.

The complaint alleged that the two ballot issue campaigns, combined, disclosed the actual source of less than one percent of their contributions. It goes on to allege the ultraconservative organizations named in the complaint, transferred money between themselves to hide the identity of actual persons who contributed to the campaigns.

Documents attached to the complaint indicate that at least one of the organizations named offered to its contributors the option to contribute “anonymously.”

A total of over 2.4 million dollars was raised and spent by these campaigns. Named donors account for only 13-thousand dollars of campaign contributions.

“Today’s ruling is disappointing because it means that for now, extremist organizations can wield their anti-gay influence in elections without disclosing the individuals who out of ignorance, paranoia or hate, made that political influence possible,” says complainant Gary Wright. “It means that for issue campaigns in Ohio, all that you have to do to avoid disclosure of contributors is to form a second nonprofit organization to funnel funds through. The Ohio campaign finance disclosure laws for issue campaigns have been rendered meaningless.”

“Hidden money paves the way for hidden agendas and political corruption,” says Sterne. “We hope that the public begins to demand that our legislators shine the light of day on the practices of these organizations and individuals by closing loopholes that circumvent the law which was written for the purpose of exposing all contributors to political campaigns, big and small.”

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