



Press Release
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FORMER STRS BOARD MEMBER SENTENCED FOR ETHICS VIOLATIONS

On May 11, 2006, Franklin County Municipal Court Judge Carrie E. Glaeden sentenced former State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) Board Member Hazel Sidaway to two years probation and 200 hours of community service on convictions for two conflict of interest charges for accepting \$670 worth of tickets to sporting and entertainment events from investment advisors to STRS.

The criminal conflict of interest charges were filed by the Columbus City Prosecutor's Office after an investigation and referral by the Ethics Commission. On April 14, 2006, a Franklin County Municipal Court jury deliberated and returned guilty verdicts against Sidaway on charges that she unlawfully accepted four tickets worth \$120 to a Cleveland Indians baseball game in 2001 from Salomon Smith Barney and two Broadway musical tickets worth \$550 to a New York City performance of Hairspray in 2003 from Frank Russell Investment Company. Both investment firms provided investment services to STRS at the time they paid for entertainment events for Sidaway and various members of her family. (The jury had acquitted Sidaway on a remaining conflict of interest charge and three related financial disclosure falsification charges.)

For her unlawful acceptance of the Cleveland Indians tickets, Judge Glaeden sentenced Sidaway to 180 days in jail, suspended on the conditions that Sidaway pay a \$120 fine and costs, and reimburse the Ethics Commission \$5,381 towards its costs of investigation. For her unlawful acceptance of the Hairpray tickets, Judge Glaeden sentenced Sidaway to 180 days in jail, which the Judge suspended, placing Sidaway on probation, requiring she pay a \$550 fine and costs, and perform 200 hours of community service. 100 hours of the community service is to be performed at the Canton City Schools and the other 100 hours is to be served at a Canton-area senior citizen center or retirement home. (Sidaway resides in

Canton, Ohio and is a former teacher in the Canton City School District.)

Sidaway apologized for the ethics violations, but asserted that except for the "two instances," she had attempted to best represent teachers in her 17 years on the STRS Board, and was unaware of ethics restrictions. Judge Glaeden questioned Sidaway's professed lack of awareness of the Ethics Law, citing several individual and widely publicized ethics convictions since 1997. Judge Glaeden accepted Sidaway's apology, but challenged her assertion that her failure to best represent the interests of STRS members was limited to the two ethics violations for which she was convicted. Based upon trial testimony that included Sidaway's, the Judge urged her to reconsider her statements, noting extensive travel funded by contributions made to the retirement system, and meals and entertainment, not only for Sidaway, but her family members, and questioning the underlying necessity of the extent of her travel in what the Judge said simply appeared to be "junkets." The Judge further indicated that the idea of community service in a senior center or nursing home was actually suggested by retired teachers in letters to the Judge regarding sentencing.

"The Ethics Commission cares that protections under the Ethics Law against personal enrichment, or some misguided notion of entitlement, for service to the public, are enforced," said David E. Freel, Executive Director of the Ethics Commission. "That is exactly what Judge Glaeden did here."

The Ohio Ethics Commission is an independent state agency that applies and administers the Ethics Law for state and local public officials and employees outside of the General Assembly and judiciary. It has the power to investigate allegations of unethical conduct of public servants. The Commission was created over 30 years ago upon the enactment of the Ohio Ethics Law in 1973.