



Press Release ***May 14, 2009***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FORMER CLEVELAND CITY COUNCIL MEMBER FOUND GUILTY

Former Cleveland City Council Member Robert J. White, III pleaded no contest and was found guilty of an Ethics charge in Cleveland Municipal Court for hiring both his spouse and stepson, using City funds, to perform constituent services. Visiting Judge C. Ellen Connally sentenced White to 180 days in jail, which she suspended, and ordered White to make full restitution to the City in the amount of \$7,740 for the moneys paid to his spouse and stepson. She also sentenced White to pay a \$500 fine and court costs, \$250 of which she suspended. White had been previously convicted of an unrelated bribery charge in the Federal District Court for the Northern District of Ohio and was sentenced to serve an 18 month sentence in federal prison.

The charges were filed by the Cleveland City Prosecutor Victor Perez upon a complaint filed by Ethics Commission Senior Investigative Attorney Julie M. Korte. White admitted that from September 2006 through October 2007, he hired his wife, Darlene Jackson, as a constituent liaison. He also admitted that in previous years, he hired his step-son, Jason Jackson, in various positions as well. The City money paid to both his spouse and his stepson amounted to \$7,740. The moneys he used to pay them were allocated to him as a member of City Council pursuant to Cleveland City Ordinance Section 173.071, which entitles each Council Member to be reimbursed up to \$1200 per month for costs associated with their performance of their duties on City Council.

The ethics conflict of interest charge is first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a maximum penalty of up to a \$1,000 fine and/or six months in jail. The Ethics Law protects the public from improper conflicts of interest by prohibiting public officials and employees from hiring family and from misusing their public positions or participating in actions to benefit themselves or their private business.

The Ohio Ethics Commission is an independent state agency that oversees the Ethics Law for state and local public officials and employees outside of the General Assembly and

judiciary. The Commission was created 35 years ago upon the enactment of the Ohio Ethics Law in 1973.