



Press Release ***June 30, 2010***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**ETHICS LAW LIMITS CANDIDATE FOR CUYAHOGA COUNTY COUNCIL
AND JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS**

At its meeting on Tuesday, the Ohio Ethics Commission issued an advisory opinion in response to a request from a candidate for the newly-created Cuyahoga County Council. Michael J. Piepsny serves as the Executive Director of the Cleveland Tenant's Organization (CTO), a non-profit organization currently holding several Cuyahoga County contracts. Mr. Piepsny asked if he could continue to serve as CTO's compensated Executive Director if he were to be elected to Council.

The Commission concluded that Mr. Piepsny would not be prohibited from continuing to serve as CTO Executive Director if he were to be elected to the Council *during the term of the existing county contracts*. The Commission also concluded, however, that CTO is dependent upon its contracts with the county. For that reason, Mr. Piepsny would be required, if elected, to step down from his position either as the Executive Director or as a member of Council, in order for CTO to continue to provide services to the County.

The Commission also adopted an advisory opinion in response to the Bath Local School District applying the Ethics Law to local school district boards of education in the exercise of their authority to appoint members of their boards to compensated positions on joint vocational school district (JVSD) boards. While supporting the authority of boards to make JVSD appointments from their own membership, the Commission concluded that the Ethics Law *would prohibit* individual school board members from voting to appoint themselves to compensated positions on a JVSD board.

“The Ethics Law limits public officials using their public positions to profit from contracts with or secure additional compensation from their own public agencies,” Ethics Commission Executive Director David E. Freel explained.

The Ethics Commission also reviewed recent financial disclosure and education activities of the staff, and discussed ongoing investigations.

The Ohio Ethics Commission is an independent agency that oversees the Ohio Ethics Law for most state and local public officials and employees. The Commission can provide, on its own initiative or upon request, ethics advice to public officials before they act. The Commission has been serving the public and state and local government since its formation as part of the Ohio Ethics Law in 1973.