



Press Release ***January 3, 2008***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FORMER BOARD OF ELECTIONS DEPUTY DIRECTOR PLEADS GUILTY

Former Franklin County Board of Elections (Board) Deputy Director Michael Hackett plead guilty today to three Ethics charges in Franklin County Municipal Court from profiting from Board of Elections' contracts for voting machines. Judge Ann Taylor sentenced Hackett to 180 days in jail on the three criminal offenses. Judge Taylor suspended the jail time, placing Hackett on a year's probation, and under conditions that he perform 45 hours of community service, make \$2500 restitution to Franklin County on behalf of the Board, and pay a total of \$750 in fines, plus court costs. Hackett told the court that he was "very sorry" for his misconduct.

The Ethics charges resulted from an investigation by the Ohio Ethics Commission and a request by Board members and the Franklin County Prosecutor. In court, Hackett admitted having a financial stake in a \$785,000 contract awarded by the Board to SST Systems, LLC on November 23, 2005, while Hackett was also serving as Deputy Director. The Board contracted with SST to provide carts to transport new voting machines. The investigation revealed, and Hackett admitted, having a stake in the voting machine cart contract and lying about his interest in a request he submitted to the Ethics Commission on June 10, 2005. Hackett stated in his written advisory request that he held no financial investment in the SST Systems contract with the Board, when his wife actually served as a "straw man" investor in SST for Hackett, that his wife had divested the investment when in fact she had not done so, and that Hackett had not reviewed and discussed the SST contract while Deputy Director, when the investigation proved he had.

Hackett admitted further violating Revolving Door restrictions by being paid \$5,056.63 by IFES, for work he performed within weeks of leaving the Board. The Board contracted with IFES for \$182,980 to serve as a Board consultant to provide technical support under a

separate contract awarded on January 3, 2006. IFES then hired Hackett as their on-site coordinator in Franklin County. IFES had submitted their bid to the Board on November 18, 2005, while Hackett was Deputy Director, and it was Hackett who was responsible for reviewing the bid by IFES.

“These criminal violations demonstrate why Ohio’s Ethics Laws prohibit officials from profiting from public contracts they oversee,” Ethics Commission Executive Director, David E. Freel stated. “Most public officials appreciate that they owe their primary duty to citizens in contracting, not to fostering their own future job or income. Spending taxpayer funds must stand on its own merit, apart from any conflicting self-interests.”