

Written by Kathy

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By Kathy Wray Coleman, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

CLEVELAND, Ohio- Cuyahoga County Sheriff Bob Reid (pictured) was fired by Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald on Thursday but it won't be effective until the end of the month, FitzGerald told reporters yesterday.

A former Bedford, OH police chief and city manager, Reid has served as county sheriff since appointed by fellow Democrats in 2009. He was then retained by FitzGerald as an appointee pursuant to Issue 6, a county government reform measure that county voters approved in 2009 that replaced the elected offices of the three-member Cuyahoga County Board of Commissioners and the county auditor, sheriff, treasurer, engineer, coroner, and clerk of courts with an elected county executive and 11-member Cuyahoga County Council.

The last elected county sheriff before Issue 6 was adopted was former sheriff Gerald McFaul, a Democrat who held the office for 32 years before resigning in disgrace in 2009 shortly before he was convicted of misdemeanor crimes in office.

Frank Bova, a former Warrensville Hts, OH police chief who served as county sheriff briefly in between McFaul and Reid, will act as interim sheriff until FitzGerald names a replacement for the county council to approve.

Reid's firing comes on the heels of complaints of mortgage fraud and illegal foreclosure activity with help allegedly from some Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas judges and magistrates, including Judges John O'Donnell and Carolyn Friedland, and Chief Magistrate

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Stephen Bucha, who leads the Cuyahoga County Foreclosure Department.

An investigation by Cleveland Urban News.Com reveals that such complaints fell on death ears when Bill Mason was county prosecutor, allegedly because he now works for the Columbus-based law firm of Bricker and Eckler, the firm with offices in Cleveland that has a contract with the county to assess employee malfeasance and represents mortgage companies such as Chase Home Finance Company of J.P. Mortgage Chase Bank, one of some five mortgage companies and banks that are part of a \$1.5 billion national foreclosure settlement that includes Ohio and Cuyahoga County residents.

That settlement is being administered in Ohio by Republican Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine.

Though the county prosecutor's office has authority to investigate foreclosure fraud complaints, county mortgage fraud investigators like Tim Lea told Cleveland Urban News.Com that Chase and others are protected because Mason is now employed with the Cleveland office of Bricker and Eckler and that current county prosecutor Tim McGinty, who was elected last year, will allegedly follow suit too, the latter allegation of which remains to be seen.

Reid has allegedly stolen homes in Cuyahoga County with the help of Judges Friedland and O'Donnell and other judges and magistrates, including Bucha. And data show that the beneficiaries are affiliates of both the Republican and Democratic parties of the county, elected officials, some judges, Reid himself, and a host of mortgage companies and banks that have bankrupt a plethora of innocent homeowners victimized by the widespread county corruption.

One in every 390 residential homes in Cuyahoga County has resulted in a foreclosure filing in 2012, research reveals. And the communities impacted most have a large number of Black homeowners, including the majority Black city of Cleveland, and the suburban communities of Euclid and Maple Hts, also a largely Black municipality.

The Heights, namely Cleveland Hts., Shaker Hts. and University Hts, have been affected too, data show.

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The alleged scheme involves using ghost or non-existing mortgage companies to target homeowners, illegally foreclosing on them, and then deflating the foreclosure sale values by up to 80 percent so that the current mortgage companies, like Chase Home Finance, can buy the foreclosed homes at a sheriff's sale for cheap and with the benefit of not having to sue the homeowner whose note it allegedly holds, though case law makes such activity illegal. Hence, Reid would steal homes appraised by the county for tax purposes say for \$123,000 and then sale them to mortgage companies and others for prices as low as \$36,000, all with the approval of several of the majority White 34 judges of the general division of the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, which is led by Presiding and Administrative Judge Nancy Fuerst.

And when the foreclosed homes are deflated for sale, state law gives the mortgage company and banks that steal them authority to charge the former homeowner the difference, within two years after the foreclosure judgment, between what Reid sales the home for and what is owed on it, a clear sham, data show.

The sheriff's chief assistant, James Bitterman, told Cleveland Urban News.Com that Reid has his own appraisal chart, though state law, which permits county sheriff's in Ohio to appraise foreclosed homes for sale, requires that foreclosed homes are to be appraised like any other residential homes in the state.

Community activists are calling on Black state legislators of Cleveland to introduce a bill that amends the state law that allows county sheriffs to appraise foreclosed homes for sale to require that the appraisal values are determined by the most recent legal county appraisal.

When asked by Cleveland Urban News.Com last year what will be done about documented foreclosure fraud by county officials the Cleveland FBI asked "what is Bill Mason doing?" And after Mason resigned last year as county prosecutor and Cleveland Urban News.Com asked the same question yesterday of his Democratic successor McGinty, his press spokesperson, Maria Russo, had no answer.

Data also show that the Cleveland Plain Dealer and Call and Post Newspapers, Black elected officials and former Cleveland NAACP President George Forbes were made aware of the aforementioned but have done nothing but to act to remain silent on the corruption that is tearing at the fabric of Cleveland neighborhoods and suburban communities of Cuyahoga County, the largest of 88 counties statewide.

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Reid's firing is another blow to the already embattled county Democratic party.

Some 60 Cuyhoga County Democratic Party affiliates, including former Cuyahoga County Commissioner Jimmy Dimora, a prior chairperson of the party, and two former Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas judges convicted of malfeasance in office and sentenced to prison, have either been convicted or have pleaded guilty to corruption-related crimes in office following a widespread county corruption probe initiated by the FBI that began four years ago.

Many of the criminal convictions and guilty pleas came with the help of convicted former county auditor turned snitch Frank Russo, though claims of bias surfaced since Republicans were spared and the Cleveland Plain Dealer Newspaper, Ohio's largest, was accused of targeting the county Democratic party for the benefit of Republicans. The newspaper, which did a story on Reid's firing and praised him as a county government reformer in spite of the wealth of data that suggests otherwise, contends that it was just doing its job in exposing corrupt politicians and business people that benefited from the breach of the community's trust by the elected officials at issue.

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