



# RON O'BRIEN

FRANKLIN COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

## PRESS RELEASE

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Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien and Edward J. Hanko, Special Agent in Charge of the Cincinnati field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), announced a multiple count felony indictment of W. Carlton Weddington, a member of the Ohio General Assembly, Ohio House of Representatives, 27<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District, as a result of a lengthy FBI investigation at the Ohio Statehouse.

O'Brien and Hanko were joined for this announcement by Eric J. Croyle, FBI Supervisory Special Agent in Columbus and agents from the FBI's Columbus Resident Agency who conducted the investigation. The Chief of O'Brien's White Collar/Economic Crime Unit, Jeffrey A. Blake assisted the FBI in the investigation.

Weddington was indicted by the Franklin County grand jury for Bribery, a third degree felony, Election Falsification, a fifth degree felony, and filing a False Ethics Disclosure statement, a first degree misdemeanor. The charges in the current indictment carry a maximum penalty of 4 ½ years in prison. Dependent on the course of the investigation, other charges may be forthcoming against Weddington.

The Bribery count alleges that Representative Weddington received cash, and all expense paid trips to South Beach Miami, Florida and Napa Valley, California during 2011, as well as checks and cash for campaign contributions, in order to corrupt or influence him in the performance of his official duties as a State Representative.

One count in the indictment charges Weddington made false statements in the "Committee to Elect Weddington" 2011 annual campaign finance report filed with the Ohio Secretary of State's office. It is alleged that the report falsely states the contributions and expenditures that were received by him and the committee, as well as the total figures for that campaign finance report.

Finally, the indictment charges Weddington with filing a false 2011 Ethics Financial Disclosure report with the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee, a report that all members of the General Assembly must file. Weddington failed to disclose gifts, travel, and lodging expenses that are required by law to be listed on that financial disclosure form.

FBI SAC Hanko stated that it is a priority of the FBI to identify and investigate cases of political corruption and that Special Agents in the Columbus Resident Agency commenced this investigation after information came to their office in connection with payday loan legislation being considered at the Ohio Statehouse. As a result of the investigation that followed, FBI agents collected significant evidence that resulted in the indictment today against Representative Weddington.

FBI agents approached Representative Weddington after the false financial disclosure report was filed in February 2012. Following consultation with counsel, Representative Weddington agreed to cooperate with the FBI and O'Brien's office. The first step in that cooperation was an agreement to resign his elected position in the Ohio General Assembly, which he has submitted today. That resignation was sought because the legislature is returning from a recess and was to resume legislative sessions. It was agreed Weddington should not participate. Also, Weddington will withdraw his candidacy for re-election and request that his name be removed from the November ballot.

Weddington has been debriefed by FBI agents prior to his indictment and he will continue to cooperate while the terms of a final agreement are negotiated by his attorney Sam Shamansky and the Prosecutors office.

Prosecutor O'Brien commended the efforts of the FBI Special Agents involved for their work during the investigation and said that his research found no case of a General Assembly member being indicted for Bribery in almost a century.

For more information contact Christy McCreary, PIO Franklin County Prosecutors office 614-525-3555, or Todd Lindgren, FBI Media Coordinator 513-979-8347.

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