

## **Do politics and the rule of law collaborate in Ottawa County? For Steve Kraus that answer may be “yes”.**

Criminal allegations came out against Steve Kraus in September 2014 for an incident in April 2014 that Kraus states is a miscommunication relating to his business as an auctioneer. At the time, Kraus was running against the Chairman of the Ohio Democrat Party and State Rep Chris Redfern for the 89<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District. Mark Mulligan, Ottawa County Prosecutor and someone who has “past associations” with Redfern, “reviewed reports about the criminal complaint privately – despite the conflict - for more than 3 months before disclosing it” as stated in the Sandusky Register Monday, June 22, 2015. This article exposes Mr. Mulligan’s conflict of interest in filing charges against Steve Kraus and his subsequent recommendation to use a special prosecutor.

When allegations surfaced and throughout this ordeal, Steve Kraus has maintained his innocence. At the time of the allegations, Kraus is quoted in the Sandusky Register dated September 26, 2014 as saying “Forces have combined to ultimately and conveniently provide an October surprise for my campaign for a situation that occurred in April of this year”. The October surprise did not deter voters in November 2014 who elected Steve Kraus to the 89<sup>th</sup> District in the Ohio House of Representatives.

Here’s where it gets really interesting: On Friday, June 26, 2015 Judge Crawford scheduled a last-minute pretrial hearing for 4:00 p.m. In a Sandusky Register article dated Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Judge Crawford states that “I just wanted to make sure everything was fine”. Special Prosecutor Timothy Braun states “There have been no real discussions about a plea agreement”.

However, there was a plea agreement offered to Steve Kraus. He was offered a plea deal that included a 1-year diversion program and the requirement that he resign his position as State Representative of the 89<sup>th</sup> District. Mr. Kraus adamantly refused the deal and maintains his innocence.

As concerned citizens, we have to ask ourselves a few questions:

If the incident that brought charges against Mr. Kraus is related to his business as an auctioneer, why didn’t the court ask him to relinquish his auctioneer’s license as part of the plea deal?

Why did Mr. Mulligan sit on the file and review it privately for over 3 months?

How could Mr. Mulligan not know Steve Kraus was running against Chris Redfern, someone with whom he has “political ties” as stated in the Sandusky Register article dated Saturday, June 27, 2015? Or did he?

Are there people in Ottawa County using the power of their positions to try and affect the outcome of elections?

Is the court trying to undermine the will of the voting public by offering a deal that requires Steve Kraus resign from his seat as House Representative of the 89<sup>th</sup> District?

Is the legal system broken in Ottawa County?