



# **EDWARD J. LEONARD**

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**Media Advisory**

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## **Franklin County Homeowner Helpline Announcement**

**Columbus, (OH)** - Franklin County Commissioners, Treasurer, and prosecutor will announce a collaborative county program to assist Franklin County residents struggling to save their home from foreclosure. The Homeowner Helpline is a 2.7 million dollar program that will use delinquent tax and assessment collection (DTAC) money from the Treasurer and Prosecutor, and community partners and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funds from the Commissioners.

With the passage of HB 562 and HB 359 earlier this year, the Treasurer and Prosecutor are now authorized to use DTAC funds for foreclosure prevention programs, nuisance abatement, and demolition.

The Homeowner Helpline program will include a public awareness campaign, as well as funding for housing counselors, nuisance abatement, rescue funding, mortgage fraud prosecutions, and homebuyer assistance. Homeowner Helpline will also fund a mediation program with the Municipal and Common Pleas Courts. The purpose of mediation is to encourage homeowners and lenders to come to the table and work out options for payment in order to prevent the homeowner from losing their home to foreclosure.

HB 562: Sec. 321.262 Notwithstanding section 321.261 of the Revised Code, in a county having a population of more than four hundred thousand according to the department of development's 2006 census estimate, if the county treasurer or prosecuting attorney determines that the amount appropriated to the office from the county's delinquent tax and assessment collection fund exceeds the amount required to be used as prescribed that section, the county treasurer or prosecuting attorney may expend the excess to provide financial assistance in the form of loans to borrowers in default on their home mortgages, including for the payment of late fees, to clear arrearage balances, and to augment moneys used in the county's foreclosure prevention program, provided that the combined amount so expended each year in the county shall not exceed three million dollars.

HB 359: Sec. 321.261 (B) In a county having a population of more than one hundred thousand according to the department of development's 2006 census estimate, if the county treasurer or prosecuting attorney determines that the amount appropriated to the office from the county's delinquent tax and assessment collection fund under division (A) of this section exceed the amount required to be used as prescribed by that division, the county treasurer or prosecuting attorney may expend the excess to assist townships or municipal corporations located in the county as provided in this division, provided that the combined amount so expended each year in a county shall not exceed three million dollars. Upon application for the funds by a township or municipal corporation, the county treasurer or prosecuting attorney may assist the township or Municipal Corporation in abating foreclosed residential nuisances, including paying the costs of securing such building, lot maintenance, and demolition. At the prosecuting attorney's discretion, the prosecuting attorney may also apply funds to costs of prosecuting alleged violations of criminal and civil laws governing real estate and related transactions, including fraud and abuse.

### **Homeowner Helpline Announces Mediation Program in Franklin County**

**Columbus, (OH)** - Homeowner Helpline, a collaborative county program designed to assist Franklin County residents struggling to save their home from foreclosure will now offer a mediation program in conjunction with the Franklin County court systems. This program is available to homeowners who are in either pre- or post foreclosure case filing status in Common Pleas Court. The purpose of mediation is to encourage homeowners and lenders to come to the table and work out options for payment in order to avoid expensive litigation proceedings and prevent the homeowner from losing their home to foreclosure.

As of the end of September 2008, there have been 7,098 foreclosure filed with the Franklin County Clerk of the Common Pleas Court. Ohio is one of a few states in the country that have a mediation program established and Franklin County is among only a handful of counties in the state participating in this Supreme Court initiated effort.

With the passage of HB 562 and HB 359 earlier this year, the Treasurer and Prosecutor are now authorized to use revenue earned from the delinquent tax and assessment collection (DTAC) funds for foreclosure prevention programs, nuisance abatement, and demolition. This revenue is the source of the \$540,000 in funding that is being provided to the Common Pleas and Municipal Courts to implement this very worthwhile program.

Please join Franklin County Treasurer Ed Leonard, Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, Municipal Court Administrative Judge Carrie Glaeden, and Common Pleas Judges Guy Reece and Stephen McIntosh on Tuesday, October 28, 2008 at 2:45pm, 373 S. High St. Columbus, Ohio in Courtroom 7A for more details.

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