

ORIGINAL

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

10-0433

State of Ohio Citizen Raleigh M Striker,  
Relator-Appellant,

On Appeal from the Richland  
County Court of Appeals  
Fifth Appellate District

V.

Clerk of Court, Daniel F. Smith  
Respondent-Appellee.

**APPEAL OF RIGHT**  
Court of Appeals  
Case No. 2008CA0336

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NOTICE OF APPEAL OF APPELLANT RALEIGH STRIKER FROM A  
CASE ORIGINATING IN THE COURT OF APPEALS  
PURSUANT TO S.CT. PRAC. R 2.1(A)

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LORI ANN MCGINNIS, ESQ.-0060029  
236 Blendon Road  
West Jefferson, OH 43162  
(419)606-1278 phone  
(419)289-8545 fax  
mcginnil@yahoo.com  
COUNSEL FOR APPELLANT  
COUNSEL OF RECORD

DAVID L. REMY, ESQ.  
30 North Diamond St.  
Mansfield, OH 44902  
COUNSEL FOR APPELLEE

FILED  
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SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

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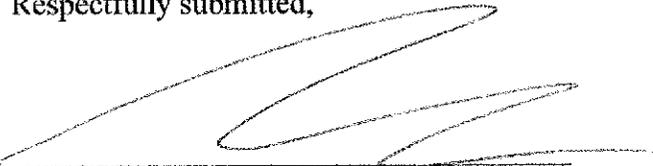
**APPEAL OF RIGHT**  
Court of Appeals  
Case No. 2008CA0336

Notice of Appeal of Raleigh Striker

Appellant Raleigh Striker, hereby gives notice of appeal to the Supreme Court of Ohio from the judgment of the Richland County Court of Appeals, Fifth Appellate District, entered in Court of Appeals Case No. 2008CA0336 on February 8, 2010.

This case originated in the court of appeals, and is one of public or great general interest. This is an appeal of right.

Respectfully submitted,



Lori Ann McGinnis Counsel of Record  
COUNSEL FOR APPELLANT,  
Raleigh Striker

Certificate of Service

I certify that a copy of this Notice of Appeal was sent by ordinary U.S. mail and email transmission to counsel for Appellee, David Remy, Law Director, City of Mansfield, 30 North Diamond St., Mansfield, OH 44902 *on 5/8/10*



Lori McGinnis  
COUNSEL FOR APPELLANT

COURT OF APPEALS  
RICHLAND COUNTY, OHIO  
FIFTH APPELLATE DISTRICT

COURT OF APPEALS  
RICHLAND COUNTY OHIO  
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2010 FEB --8 AM 11:35  
LINDA H. FRARY  
CLERK

STATE OF OHIO, EX REL.  
RALEIGH M. STRIKER

Relator

-vs-

CLERK OF COURT,  
DANIEL F. SMITH

Respondent

JUDGES:

Hon. W. Scott Gwin, P.J.  
Hon. William B. Hoffman, J.  
Hon. John W. Wise, J.

Case No. 2008-CA-0336

OPINION

CHARACTER OF PROCEEDING:

Complaint for Writ of Mandamus

JUDGMENT:

Granted in part; denied in part

DATE OF JUDGMENT ENTRY:

APPEARANCES:

For Relator

LORI A. MCGINNIS  
3183 Wally Road  
Loudonville, OH 44842

For Respondent

DAVID L. REMY  
30 North Diamond Street  
Mansfield, OH 44902

Gwin, P.J.

{¶1} Relator, Raleigh M. Striker, has filed a Complaint for Writ of Mandamus against Respondent, Daniel F. Smith, Clerk of Courts alleging Respondent has failed to comply with the "Sunshine Law." Respondent has filed a brief in opposition. In addition, Relator has filed a "Motion for Supplemental (sic) Pleading" detailing additional allegations which occurred after the initial complaint was filed.

{¶2} Initially, we granted Relator's motion to supplement the Complaint. Civ.R. 15(A) permits a party to amend a pleading as a matter of course prior to the filing of a responsive pleading. Relator filed the motion to supplement the complaint on January 15, 2009. Respondent did not file an answer until January 23, 2009, therefore, Relator is able to amend his original complaint without leave of court.

{¶3} Relator essentially raises two claims in his Complaint in addition to a request for statutory damages and attorney fees. First, he requests this Court issue a writ of mandamus because Respondent did not provide copies of public records promptly upon Relator's request. Second, Relator avers Respondent has failed to properly post its public records policy.

#### **I. First Claim: Public Records**

{¶4} Relator's first claim involves a public record request for three documents: "(1) 1/02/07 remand SC, (2) 1/31/07 memorandum, and (3) 4/30/07 JE." There was a fourth item requested, however, the parties agree the fourth item was not a public record subject to disclosure. Relator went to Respondent's office and made an oral request for these documents on December 4, 2008. Relator was advised the file containing the documents was in the office of the judge assigned to the case, therefore,

the request could not be fulfilled at that time. Upon hearing this, Relator left the building. On December 29, 2008, Relator presented a written request for the documents to Respondent. Respondent made a notation on the request, "Waiting on Judge Payton, Dan Smith 12-29-08." Relator took the written request with him. Relator filed the instant Complaint the next day on December 30, 2008. Respondent provided the requested documents on January 20, 2009.

{¶5} Respondent raises three arguments in his defense. First, Respondent states the file containing the documents sought by Relator was in the possession of the trial court judge at the time Relator made his request. Respondent argues R.C. 149.43(B)(1) merely requires public records to be made available to a requestor "within a reasonable period of time". Because the file was not in the possession of the clerk at the time of the request, Respondent could not instantly fulfill the request. Both times Relator appeared at the Clerk's office, Respondent notified Relator of the immediate unavailability of the documents. Upon learning this, Relator left the office each time without leaving the request.

{¶6} This act of leaving the office is the crux of Respondent's second argument. Respondent argues Relator withdrew his request by failing to leave a copy of the request with Respondent.

{¶7} We will address these arguments together as they are intertwined. The Tenth District Court of Appeals has examined the duty of a public office pursuant to a public records request, "[P]ublic offices are required to promptly prepare records and transmit them within a reasonable period of time after receiving the request for the copy. The term "promptly" is not defined in the statute. However, statutes in other states give

their agencies from between three and 12 days from the date the public records were requested to make the documents available. The word "prompt" is defined as "performed readily or immediately." Webster's Eleventh New Collegiate Dictionary (2005) 994." *State ex rel. Simonsen v. Ohio Dept. of Rehab. & Corr.* 2008 WL 5381924, 6 (Ohio App. 10 Dist.).

{¶8} Other courts have examined the number of days which may be considered reasonable or unreasonable. Ten business days has been held to be reasonable while 32, 37, and 79 business days have been held to be unreasonable. See *State ex rel. Bardwell v. Cuyahoga Cty. Bd. of Commrs.*, 2009 WL 3387654, 1 (Ohio App. 8 Dist.) (ten business days not violation); *State ex rel. Simonsen v. Ohio Dept. of Rehab. & Corr.*, 2009 WL 250867, 7 (Ohio App. 10 Dist.) (37 days not reasonable); *State ex rel. Bardwell v. Rocky River Police Dept.*, 2009 WL 406600, 7 (Ohio App. 8 Dist.) (32 business days unreasonable); *Bardwell v. Cleveland*, 2009 WL 3478444, 5 (Ohio App. 8 Dist.) (79 days unreasonable). In the instant case, the records were given to Relator on the 13<sup>th</sup> business day after the request was made in writing. We cannot say 13 days is unreasonable under these circumstances.

{¶9} We find the oral request made on December 4, 2009 was withdrawn when Relator left the office. Relator did not indicate he would return for the records nor did he leave information for Respondent to contact him once the file had been retrieved.

{¶10} Again, Relator took his written request with him on December 29, 2008. Respondent was not in possession of a list of the records sought until Respondent was served with a copy of the Complaint on January 5, 2009. Once Respondent was in

possession of the list of records, they were provided to Relator on the tenth business day following Respondent's receipt of the request.

{¶11} Whether we consider the request made on December 29 or January 5, we find Respondent provided the copies requested promptly within a reasonable time in either case.

{¶12} Finally, Respondent's third contention is the instant complaint is moot. Upon receiving a copy of the complaint in this case, Respondent learned the list of documents Relator wanted. Respondent made copies of those documents and furnished them to Relator which Respondent argues makes this cause of action moot.

{¶13} The Supreme Court addressed an analogous fact pattern in *State ex rel. Toledo Blade Co. v. Ohio Bureau of Workers' Comp. et al.* (2005), 106 Ohio St.3d 113. In *Toledo Blade*, the Blade requested certain records from the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC). After the Complaint was filed, the BWC provided certain records. The Supreme Court held, "The Blade's mandamus claim for unredacted audit reports of coin-inventory records is moot because respondents have now provided these records. See *State ex rel. Cranford v. Cleveland*, 103 Ohio St.3d 196, 2004-Ohio-4884, 814 N.E.2d 1218, ¶ 23, quoting \*116 *State ex rel. Cincinnati Enquirer, Div. of Gannett Satellite Info. Network, Inc. v. Dupuis*, 98 Ohio St.3d 126, 2002-Ohio-7041, 781 N.E.2d 163, ¶ 8 (" 'In general, the provision\*\*715 of requested records to a relator in a public-records mandamus case renders the mandamus claim moot' "). *State ex rel. Toledo Blade Co. v. Ohio Bur. of Workers' Comp.* (2005), 106 Ohio St.3d 113, 115-116, 832 N.E.2d 711, 714 – 715.

{¶14} We find Relator's claim to be moot based upon Respondent's having provided the requested documents to Relator. Further, even had the claim not been moot, we do not find Respondent failed to comply with his duty under the Public Records Act.

## **II. Second Claim: Posting of Public Records Policy**

{¶15} Relator claims Respondent has failed to post its public records policy. R.C. 149.43(E)(2) provides in part, "The public office shall create a poster that describes its public records policy and shall post the poster in a conspicuous place in the public office and in all locations where the public office has branches." The parties filed an Agreed Statement of Facts which states, "A Public Records Rights poster is not posted in the Clerk of Courts Office. However, copies of such rights are located in the City's Mail Bulletin Board located on the Third Floor of the Administration Building and at certain other locations throughout the building."

{¶16} Respondent argues the posters in the Administration Building comply with the statute. The statute requires the poster to be displayed in the public office. The parties agree the poster is not located in the Clerk of Court's office. Although the parties agree the poster appears throughout the building, Respondent has failed to prove the posters appear sufficiently close to his office to comply with the statute. Because Respondent concedes the poster is not located in his office, the writ of mandamus is granted with respect to placement of the poster only.

## **III. Third Claim: Award of Statutory Damages and Attorney Fees**

{¶17} R.C. 149.43(C) requires an award of statutory damages in cases where a written request is made and where the public office has failed to comply with the written

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FIFTH APPELLATE DISTRICT

STATE OF OHIO, EX REL.  
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Relator

-vs-

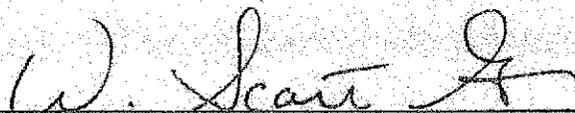
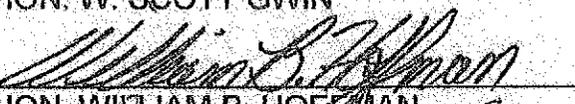
JUDGMENT ENTRY

CLERK OF COURT,  
DANIEL F. SMITH

Respondent

CASE NO. 2008-CA-0336

For the reasons stated in our accompanying Memorandum-Opinion, the Writ is granted in part and denied in part. Costs to be divided equally between Relator and Respondent.

  
HON. W. SCOTT GWIN  
  
HON. WILLIAM B. HOFFMAN  
  
HON. JOHN W. WISE