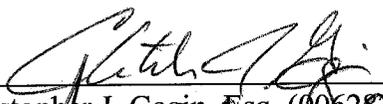


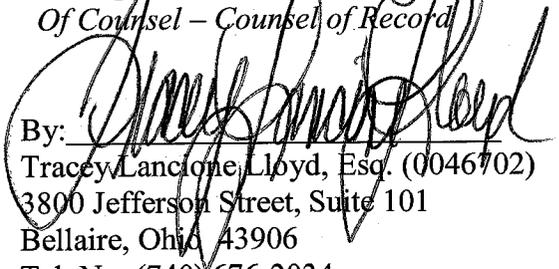


Pursuant to S.Ct.Prac.R. 12.04(B) and Civ.R. 12(C), Respondent, David M. Lucas ("Lucas"), by and through counsel, now moves this Honorable Court for an Order granting him judgment on the pleadings. The grounds for this motion are set forth more fully in the memorandum in support, which is attached hereto and incorporated as if fully re-written herein.

Respectfully submitted,

LANCIONE, LLOYD & HOFFMAN  
LAW OFFICE CO., L.P.A.

By:   
Christopher J. Gagin, Esq. (0062820)  
*Of Counsel - Counsel of Record*

By:   
Tracey Lancione Lloyd, Esq. (0046702)  
3800 Jefferson Street, Suite 101  
Bellaire, Ohio 43906  
Tel. No. (740) 676-2034  
Email: [chris.gagin@gaginlegal.com](mailto:chris.gagin@gaginlegal.com)  
[traceylloyd@comcast.net](mailto:traceylloyd@comcast.net)

*Trial Counsel for Respondent*

## MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

### I. CASE HISTORY:

On November 6, 2012, Republican David M. Lucas ("Lucas") defeated Democrat Richard "Dick" Flanagan ("Flanagan") 16,859 to 14,209 (54.26% to 45.74%) to become the next Sheriff of Belmont County, Ohio. Earlier, in the March primary, Flanagan challenged and defeated two-term incumbent Sheriff Fred Thompson in the Democratic primary, while Lucas ran unopposed in the Republican primary. Their respective victories on March 7, 2012, set up Belmont County's highest profile race last fall.

Both candidates ran upon their law enforcement records and their vision for protecting the people of Belmont County. Flanagan, at all times relevant, was a Lieutenant with the Village of Bellaire, Ohio Police Department. Lucas, meanwhile, was twenty-six (26) year veteran of the Belmont County Sheriff's Department, having joined the Department as a road deputy in 1981. He took early retirement in 2007 at the rank of Major, serving from that time forward as a Special or Reserve Deputy Sheriff with duties including firearm certification supervision and special security details.

The Lucas/Flanagan race was hard fought but otherwise clean. There were no personal attacks. No harsh television ads. There were no complaints filed with the Ohio Elections Commission during the campaign. There were no pre-election protests. There was no prohibition action filed against the Belmont County Board of Elections ("BOE") seeking to remove Lucas from the ballot, and there were no post-election contest petition(s) filed pursuant to R.C. §3515.09.

The BOE certified the election results to the Ohio Secretary of State on November 27, 2013, and Lucas took office as Belmont County Sheriff on January 7, 2012, pursuant to R.C. §311.01(A).

Thereafter, on February 8, 2013, Flanagan filed the instant original complaint in quo warranto asserting Lucas now unlawfully occupies the office of Sheriff, with Flanagan alleging Lucas failed to meet all qualification requirements set forth in R.C. §311.01(B).<sup>1</sup>

Lucas, who was served via certified mail on February 14, 2013, and who is filing his answer concurrently with the filing of this motion, now moves this Honorable Court pursuant to S.Ct.Prac.R. 12.04 and Civ.R. 12(C), for judgment on the pleadings.

## II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

Civ.R. 12(C) governs a motion for judgment on the pleadings. In its entirety, Civ.R. 12(C) states, "After the pleadings are closed but within such time as not to delay the trial, any party may move for judgment on the pleadings." In *State ex rel. Midwest Pride IV, Inc. v. Pontious*, 75 Ohio St.3d 565, 664 N.E.2d 931 (1996), this Honorable Court provided the appropriate standard of review for a Civ.R. 12(C) motion.

[T]he standards for Civ.R. 12(B)(6) and (C) motions are similar, (Footnote omitted.) but Civ.R. 12(C) motions are specifically for resolving questions of law, *Peterson v. Teodosio* (1973), 34 Ohio St.2d 161, 166, 63 O.O.2d 262, 264, 297 N.E.2d 113, 117. Under Civ.R. 12(C), dismissal is appropriate where a court (1) construes the material allegations in the complaint, with all reasonable inferences to be drawn therefrom, in favor of the nonmoving party as true, and (2) finds beyond doubt, that the plaintiff could prove no set of facts in support of his claim that would entitle him to relief. (Citation omitted.) Thus, Civ.R. 12(C) requires a determination that no material factual issues exist and that the movant

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<sup>1</sup> This action followed the filing of 'letters of protest,' which Flanagan and another non-party resident of Belmont County, Gary Landers, filed with the BOE during the second week of December, 2012. The BOE dismissed the protests at a public meeting on December 17, 2012.

is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. (Citation omitted.) *State ex rel. Midwest Pride IV, Inc. v. Pontious*, 75 Ohio St.3d at 569-570, 664 N.E.2d at 936.

However, Civ.R. 12(C) permits the Court to consider the complaint and answer, while a Civ.R. 12(B)(6) motion must be judged on the face of the complaint alone. *Id.* at 569.

To establish entitled to a writ of quo warranto, this Court has held a relator must establish that an office is being unlawfully held and exercised by respondent, and that relator is entitled to the office. *State ex rel. Zeigler v. Zumbar*, 129 Ohio St.3d 240, 2011-Ohio-2939, 951 N.E.2d 405; *State ex rel. Varnau, v. Wenninger*, 131 Ohio St.3d 169, 2012-Ohio-224, \_\_\_ N.E.2d \_\_\_. However, where a relator fails to establish entitlement to an office in a quo warranto action, judgment may still be rendered on the issue of whether the respondent lawfully holds the office. *State ex rel. Meyers v. Brown*, 87 Ohio St.3d 545, 547, 721 N.E.2d 1053 (2000); *State ex rel. Varnau*.

### III. ARGUMENT

#### A. *Relator's Original Complaint Is Properly Barred Under The Doctrine Of Laches:*

There exists a threshold question of law in this matter relative to the doctrine of laches. The question before the Court is whether the doctrine of laches bars an otherwise timely quo warranto action when the election-related action is filed by a losing candidate who held actual knowledge of the victor's alleged disqualification prior to the election but failed to act.

##### i. *Relator Knew of Allegations in December 2011 – And Did Nothing:*

Though Flanagan seeks to use to its contents to establish a time-line for Lucas, the complaint actually establishes a time-line as to what Flanagan knew, when he knew it and (most importantly) what he did not do about it. Specifically, the Court's attention is directed to

paragraph 12. In summary fashion, paragraph 12 establishes December 2011 through December 2012 as the applicable timeframe for both Flanagan's knowledge and inaction:

12. Previous sheriff of Belmont County, Fred Thompson, filed a protest on December 23, 2011 whereby Mr. Thompson specifically notified the Belmont County Board of Elections that Respondent did not meet the statutory qualification of R.C. §311.01(B)(8) and (B)(9). *Additional filings in December, 2012 have been made with the Board of Elections asserting the same by Gary Landers and Relator but the Belmont county (sic) Board of Elections has ignored its statutory obligation as required by R.C. 3501.11(J) and (K) and has refused to investigate the qualifications of Respondent, David M. Lucas. (Emphasis added.)*

From paragraph 12, two (2) things are clear. First, at all times relevant, Flanagan held actual knowledge of the qualification allegations former Sheriff Thompson leveled against Lucas on or about December 23, 2011. Second, paragraph 12 establishes that the allegations Mr. Landers and Flanagan made to the BOE in December 2012 were 'the same' allegations Sheriff Thompson made against Lucas in December 2011. In other words, there is nothing in Flanagan's original complaint in quo warranto that was not known to him in December 2011 even though the complaint was filed over a year later on February 8, 2013.

In fairness, until Flanagan secured the Democrat nomination for Sheriff, he was unable to protest Lucas' candidacy. As the Court well knows, R.C. §3513.05 limits those who may lawfully challenge a candidate filing a declaration of candidacy for party nomination or election to office to persons who are members of the same political party and eligible to vote in the primary election, or the controlling committee of that political party. It was for this reason that former Sheriff Thompson's protest was rejected. As a member of the Democrat Party, R.C. §3513.05 barred Sheriff Thompson from challenging Lucas' qualifications under R.C. §311.01(B). Likewise, as a fellow Democrat, Flanagan was also barred from challenging Lucas prior to the primary election.

However, there were 244 days between the primary election on March 7, 2012, and the November 6, 2012, general election. Once Flanagan secured his parties' nomination, he held both the right and duty to address the Lucas qualification issue(s) with the utmost diligence, as he held actual knowledge of them at all times relevant. Actions in either prohibition and/or mandamus were available against the BOE to prevent Lucas' name from appearing on the ballot in November.

Yet, Flanagan took no action at all. As his complaint clearly states, Flanagan waited until the second week of December 2012. Only then – nearly a year after Sheriff Thompson first raised the issue and over 270 days after he was nominated, did Flanagan (and Mr. Landers) file letters of protest with the BOE. Stated differently, as his complaint lays bare, the first time Flanagan ever questioned the BOE about Lucas' qualifications to run for Sheriff was more than a month after his general election loss and well after the BOE had completed its canvass and certified his electoral loss pursuant to R.C. §3505.32 and §3505.33.

ii. *The Doctrine of Laches in Election-Related Cases v. Quo Warranto:*

If permitted to proceed, the factual allegations in Flanagan's complaint will effectively eviscerate this Court's mandate in a long line of election-related cases. This Court has flatly cautioned, "Relators in election cases must exercise the utmost diligence." *State ex rel. Fuller v. Medina Cty. Bd. Of Elections*, 97 Ohio St.3d 221, \_\_2002-Ohio-5922, 778 N.E.2d 37; *Campaign to Elect Larry Carver Sheriff v. Campaign to Elect Anthony Stankiewicz Sheriff*, 101 Ohio St.3d 256, 2004-Ohio-812, 804 N.E.2d 419; *State ex rel. Landis v. Morrow Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 88 Ohio St.3d 187, 724 N.E. 775 (2000); *State ex rel. Varnau*, 131 Ohio St.3d at 172, \_\_ N.E.2d

It is acknowledged that this matter is not an expedited election case, governed by S.Ct.Prac.R. 12.08, though this is most definitely an election-related matter. And, Lucas is mindful of the Court's comments on quo warranto timeliness in *Varnau*, this Court's most recent quo warranto case involving a county sheriff.

As the Court will recall, the relator in *Varnau* sought a writ of quo warranto to remove a sheriff elected to his third term because of facts that would have allegedly disqualified him from becoming a candidate prior to his first term. This Court denied the writ indicating that to be timely, a writ of quo warranto must be directed to challenge a current term of office rather than an expired one. *State ex rel. Varnau*, at ¶15. In reaching that result, the Court distinguished *State ex rel. Huron Cty. Prosecutor v. Westerhold*, 72 Ohio St.3d 392, 650 N.E.2d 463 (1995) from the facts in *Varnau*, noting that a prosecutor's quo warranto challenge to a veterans service commission appointment 'only' a month and a half after the appointment constituted prompt action. *State ex rel. Varnau*, 131 Ohio St.3d at 172-3, \_\_\_ N.E.2d \_\_\_.

And, as referenced above, Lucas is also mindful that this action otherwise comports with general requirement that a quo warranto claim must challenge a current term of office. *Zeigler*, 129 Ohio St.3d 240, 2011-Ohio-2939, 951 N.E.2d 405, ¶14; *State ex rel. Varnau*, at ¶15.

However, this complaint is distinguishable from *Varnau*, and this fact pattern must give the Court pause to examine the relationship of quo warranto and election-related cases. Here, the Court is faced with a losing candidate who held actual knowledge of the issues he now raises in quo warranto— but did nothing— for a full year before filing a legal challenge of any kind. Specifically because Flanagan failed to press his challenge prior to the election, the Court cannot truly say that, "quo warranto is truly the exclusive remedy by which one's right to hold a public office may be litigated." *State ex rel. Battin v. Bush* (1988), 40 Ohio St.3d 236, 238-239, 533

N.E.2d 301; see also *State ex rel Varnau v. Wenninger*, 128 Ohio St.3d 361, 2011-Ohio-759, 944 N.E.2d 663, ¶ 9. Flanagan could have, and should have, presented the exact same factual case had he timely sought a writ of prohibition or mandamus against the BOE *prior to* the general election. As will be argued more fully below, allowing Flanagan to wait until the election results are known before he asserts his challenge allows a losing candidate to dictate terms, and possible outcomes, to his victor.

To ensure the utmost diligence, laches must also properly bar a losing candidates' quo warranto action where there was actual knowledge of the (alleged) disqualifying facts sufficiently prior to an election to seek a writ of prohibition. Without such a requirement, why would any candidate for office, who holds knowledge that his opponent may not possess the statutory qualifications necessary to hold office, ever file an expedited elections case and subject themselves to the time, expense, political consequence or laches argument inherent in such an action prior to the election?

If Flanagan's action is allowed to proceed, this Court will immediately serve as chief political strategist to untold numbers of candidates who will 'hold their fire' until after an election's results are known. If they are victorious, they will assume office without incident. However, if they lose, they will suddenly spring quo warranto upon their victorious opponent, as well as the general public, in an effort overturn the voter's will and take the office through judicial action.

Importantly, such an extension of the laches doctrine would not have a chilling effect on judicial review of a candidate's qualifications, where necessary. Indeed, such an extension would squarely comport with the General Assembly's determination that a county board of elections undertake the review of a candidate's qualifications for the office of sheriff pursuant to

R.C. 311.01(F)(2). The statutory framework strongly suggests the General Assembly intended for a pre-election challenge via prohibition or mandamus when a challenger holds actual or constructive knowledge of an alleged deficiency in a candidate's qualifications. Of course, quo warranto would remain both appropriate and available to a losing candidate who learns of disqualifying facts only *after* an election or the time for filing prohibition/mandamus has passed. This framework properly positions the extraordinary writ of quo warranto as a remedy of last resort, rather than one of convenience, choice and advantage as Flanagan now seeks.

Such an extension would also be entirely consistent with this Court's repeated directives to candidates for sheriff in the State of Ohio. As the *Varnau* Court reminded:

This result comports with our consistent requirement in election-related cases that relators "act with the utmost diligence." *Blankenship v. Blackwell*, 103 Ohio St.3d 567, 2004-Ohio-5596, 817 N.E.2d 382, ¶ 19. "If relators in election cases do not exercise the utmost diligence, laches may bar an action for extraordinary relief" *State ex rel Craig v. Scioto Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 117 Ohio St.3d 158, 2008-Ohio-706, 882 N.E.2d 435, ¶ 11. We have previously held that extraordinary-writ actions challenging a sheriff candidate's R.C. 311.01(B)(9) qualification may be barred by laches. See *Campaign to Elect Larry Carver Sheriff v. Campaign to Elect Anthony Stankiewicz Sheriff*, 101 Ohio St.3d 256, 2004-Ohio-812, 804 N.E.2d 419; *State ex rel Landis v. Morrow Cty. Bd. of Elections* (2000), 88 Ohio St.3d 187, 724 N.E.2d 775.

From the time he became aware of the allegations in December 2011 to the time he became the Democrat nominee for sheriff, Flanagan's complaint conclusively establishes a delay of over 270 days prior to his *initial* challenge to the BOE's determination, and the complaint conclusively establishes that Flanagan never raised the matter through prohibition or mandamus. And, yet, Flanagan's complaint goes to great lengths to set forth details of the BOE's alleged failure to properly investigate Lucas's qualifications. Whether his delay in challenging the BOE's determination was the result of Flanagan's hubris that he would/could not lose in November, or whether he simply chose not to do anything for other reasons, the fact remains that

he is now seeking to overturn an otherwise valid election result upon allegations that both could have, and should have, been raised prior to the election via prohibition.

With this proposition in mind, the Court is respectfully reminded of the elements of laches: 1) an unreasonable delay or lapse of time in asserting a right, 2) the absence of an excuse for the delay, 3) knowledge, actual or constructive, of the injury or wrong, and 4) prejudice to the other party. *State ex rel. Polo v. Cuyahoga Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 74 Ohio St.3d 143, 145, 656 N.E.2d 1277, 1279 (1995); *State ex rel. Superamerica Group v. Licking Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 80 Ohio St.3d 182, 186, 685 N.E.2d 507, 510 (1997).

The applicability of the laches doctrine to the facts set forth in the complaint is undeniable. As this Court oft cites in its expedited election cases, a delay as short as nine (9) days has precluded the Court's consideration of a case's merits. *Paschal v. Cuyahoga Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 74 Ohio St.3d 141, 656 N.E.2d 1276 (1995). Here, a delay of over 270 days, or 30 times greater, in a non-expedited election case must constitute a grossly unreasonable delay. Moreover, as demonstrated above, Flanagan's complaint establishes his actual knowledge of the allegations he now asserts against Lucas, and Flanagan can provide no reasonable excuse for his failure to press his claim over the seven (7)-plus months between his primary victory in March and the general election in November 2012.

Finally, there is little question that Lucas has suffered prejudice because of the delay, as he has had to run and fund a campaign for office he allegedly may not qualify for, and must now deal with this matter as the sitting Sheriff of Belmont County, Ohio, with all the pressures and responsibilities that come with that office. Everything before this Court could have, and should have, been brought well before the general election.

There is also a public policy interest in such an extension of the laches doctrine. Assume, *arguendo*, that Flanagan prevails. Lucas is removed from office, and Flanagan takes office.<sup>2</sup> In such a scenario, the Court is asked to consider the public harm. First, an otherwise fair and free election is tossed aside, and the majority of Belmont County voters are denied the individual they selected to be their Sheriff. Such a result will severely damage voter confidence in the finality of elections in Ohio.

Second, there is the denial of the electoral process. Candidates like Flanagan can effectively deny the public a meaningful choice at the polls if they are not required to bring qualification challenges at the earliest possible opportunity. With an election over, and holding the right to seek the removal of the victor through quo warranto, the losing candidate effectively denies the opposing party and/or public with the opportunity to find a replacement, or write-in, candidate, thereby doing great harm to the integrity of the elections process.

Third, there is the destruction of the public's confidence its elected officials. As in this case, the public is left to wonder, "Who's our sheriff?" The people of Belmont County have heard very public allegations that their newly elected sheriff – a man with twenty-six (26) years of experience with the Belmont County Sheriff's Department – is 'unqualified' to hold the office of Sheriff. Yet, the man who ran against him never challenged his qualifications until after he lost the election by a sizable margin. The public has a right to know that the men and women presented to them on a given ballot have met all necessary criteria to run for office, and the winner will serve them in the office they seek, if elected. Candidates like Flanagan seek to usurp

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<sup>2</sup> Though beyond the scope of this motion as it requires additional evidence, Flanagan's own ability to meet the qualification requirement of R.C. §311.01(B)(3) is questionable, as there is a strong likelihood that Flanagan, as a Lieutenant at all times relevant in the Village of Bellaire, Ohio Police Department, violated either, or both, the Hatch Act, 5 U.S.C. §§ 7321-7326 and/or 5 U.S.C. §1501-1508, and/or R.C. §124.57, by becoming a candidate for a partisan election without resigning from the force. As such, he potentially failed to comply with all applicable election laws as R.C. §311.01(B)(3) mandates, which would prohibit him from taking the office he seeks.

the power that naturally flows from the people to their elected representatives, substituting election by judicial ambush for the popular vote the people refused to grant them.

Finally, there is the potential burdensome cost of a special election to the public. In the event that a writ of quo warranto issues, but the relator is also not qualified to hold the office challenged (as may be the case herein), the public must pay for an expensive special election once a replacement sheriff is appointed to complete the unexpired term.

All of these very real, very public harms will be avoided if this Court holds firm to its bright-line mandate that relators with actual knowledge of qualification deficiencies must bring the challenge with the utmost diligence, i.e. prior to the election. The extraordinary writ of quo warranto should remain an action of last resort, rather than a tool of political gamesmanship. Yet, Flanagan's complaint was precisely timed and played to secure an office a sizable majority of Belmont County voters did not want him to hold. For these reasons, Lucas respectfully requests a judgment on the pleadings which dismisses this action under the doctrine of laches.

*B. Factually, Relator Can Establish No Set of Facts to Entitle Him to Relief:*

In the event, this Court declines to apply the doctrine of laches bar consideration of the complaint, Flanagan can prove no set of facts to support his claim of entitlement to relief.

*i. Primary Factual Error – State of Residency:*

Viewing his complaint in its entirety, it is clear Flanagan believes that Lucas moved to the State of Florida between 2007 and 2011. *See Complaint ¶¶ 11, 32, 33 and 34.* From this, Flanagan draws the clear inference that Lucas could not have undertaken any supervisory or full-time law enforcement activities because he was living outside the State of Ohio. To drive this point home, Flanagan goes so far as to allege that Lucas, "...established a residency in Florida

during the period from 2007 through 2011 and therefore, paid no Ohio State Income Tax during said period.” *Complaint*, ¶ 34.

Succinctly stated, Flanagan’s allegation is as absurd as it is false. Filed concurrent with this motion, Lucas’ answer to paragraph 34 of the Complaint includes redacted copies of his 2007-2011 Ohio Income Tax forms attached as Exhibit C. As Exhibit C clearly proves, at all times relevant in 2007 – 2011, Lucas was a resident of the State of Ohio, paying his fair share of Ohio income taxes.

The best falsehoods, of course, are those which hide in the shadow of truth. In this case, Lucas and his wife own vacation property in Florida, which was purchased on or about June 30, 2010. For the Court’s convenience and in answer to paragraph 11 (32, 33 and 34) of the Complaint, Lucas has attached a copy of his deed as Exhibit B. Lucas has never hidden the fact that he owns vacation property in Florida, but he has never used his vacation property to establish a residence within the State of Florida – as his Ohio tax returns for 2007-2011 conclusively prove.

Moreover, because his Florida vacation property was never his lawful residence, Lucas was not required to list the property on his qualification paperwork, as Flanagan mistakenly alleges in paragraph 31 of the Complaint. Lucas properly listed his actual, lawful *Ohio* residences as required. Thus, the allegation that Lucas signed a false candidate application is, again, patently absurd.

As such, there is no set of facts Flanagan can establish to prove that Lucas was *ever* a resident of the State of Florida. Thus, the central premise of Flanagan’s complaint is false, and there exist no set of facts upon which Flanagan can establish otherwise relative to Lucas’s residency. Indeed, given the false, frivolous and harassing nature of Flanagan’s allegations, the

Court is asked to consider appropriate sanctions for both Flanagan and Flanagan's counsel of record pursuant to S.Ct.Prac.R. 4.03(A).

*ii. Factual Error – Supervisory Role and Work History:*

Likewise, Flanagan's complaint contains allegations that Lucas lacks both the requisite supervisory and full-time work history for the period comprising 2007-2011. *Complaint*, ¶¶ 22-30.

In paragraph 10 of the complaint, Flanagan asserts that Lucas retired from the Belmont County Sheriff's Department on October 31, 2007. That's true. After twenty-six (26) years as a deputy, Lucas retired holding the rank of Major. *Answer*, ¶¶ 10 & 18. However, Lucas continued to serve the Belmont County Sheriff's Department as a special or reserve deputy sheriff. *Answer*, ¶ 18. Exhibit B provides the Court with records from May 9, 2007, (prior to Lucas' retirement) through to June 13, 2012. These records include Lucas' signature as a supervising range instructor and include records from 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. In that capacity, Lucas worked full-time, eight (8) hours days and was among those who supervised firearm requalification certification for the Sheriff's Department, as the Answer's Exhibit B conclusively establishes.

Upon information and belief, it was Lucas' on-going training role that formed the basis of the BOE's certification of Lucas' qualification under R.C. §311.01(B)(8) and (B)(9). Because Lucas can establish both his supervisory and full-time activities with the Belmont County Sheriff's Department through Exhibit B, Flanagan can prove no set of facts to entitle him to the relief he requests.

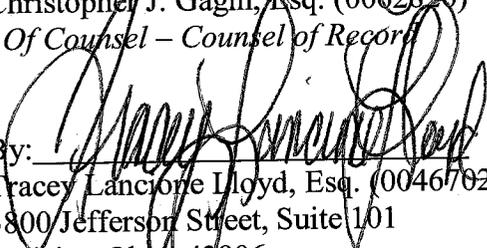
IV. CONCLUSION:

For the foregoing reasons, Respondent respectfully requests this Honorable Court dismiss Relator's original complaint pursuant to the doctrine of laches and/or Civ.R. 12(C), as the answer and Exhibits attached thereto prove that Relator can prove no set of facts in support of his claim that would entitle him to relief.

Respectfully submitted,

LANCIONE, LLOYD & HOFFMAN  
LAW OFFICE CO., L.P.A.

By:   
Christopher J. Gagin, Esq. (0062820)  
*Of Counsel – Counsel of Record*

By:   
Tracey Lancione Lloyd, Esq. (0046702)  
3800 Jefferson Street, Suite 101  
Bellaire, Ohio 43906  
Tel. No. (740) 676-2034  
Email: [chris.gagin@gaginlegal.com](mailto:chris.gagin@gaginlegal.com)  
[traceylloyd@comcast.net](mailto:traceylloyd@comcast.net)

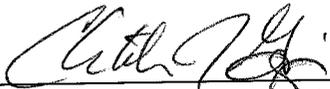
*Trial Counsel for Respondent*

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true copy of Respondent's Answer was served via electronic mail upon Relator's Counsel of Record, Mark E. Landers, Esq., at *mark.landlers.esq.@gmail.com*, pursuant to S.Ct.Prac.R. 3.11(B), on this 26<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

LANCIONE, LLOYD & HOFFMAN  
LAW OFFICE CO. L.P.A.

By:   
Christopher J. Gagin, Esq. (0062820)  
*Of Counsel – Counsel of Record*