

# Ohio Supreme Court rejects challenge of Jeff Johnson's candidacy for Cleveland mayor setting the stage

Written by Kathy

Monday, 31 July 2017 18:01 - Last Updated Sunday, 06 August 2017 00:14

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**Pictured are Cleveland Ward 10 councilman and mayoral candidate Jeff Johnson, who is Black, Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Belvan Walsh, and Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley (wearing grey suit) )**

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**Google Plus alone. Tel: (216) 659-0473 and Email: [editor@clevelandurbannews.com](mailto:editor@clevelandurbannews.com). Kathy Wray Coleman, editor-in-chief, and who trained for 17 years at the Call and Post Newspaper in Cleveland, Ohio. We interviewed former president Barack Obama one-on-one when he was campaigning for president. As to the Obama interview, [CLICK HERE TO READ THE ENTIRE ARTICLE AT CLEVELAND URBAN NEWS.COM, OHIO'S LEADER IN BLACK DIGITAL NEWS](#)**

CLEVELAND URBAN NEWS.COM-COLUMBUS, Ohio - The Ohio Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a challenge to Cleveland Councilman Jeff Johnson's mayoral candidacy, setting the stage for a possible run-off between Johnson and incumbent mayor Frank Jackson, if he can overcome seven other bonafide candidates, including Councilman Zack Reed and state Rep. Bill Patmon, to gain second place, Jackson of whom remains the favorite in a race with nine total candidates and two write-ins.

The other running for mayor are former East Cleveland mayor Eric Brewer, Brandon Chrostowski, Robert Kilo, Tony Madalone, Dyrone Smith, and write-ins Jerome Bell and Camry Kincaid.

The non-partisan primary election for mayor and the 17 city council seats is Sept 12 with the top two vote-getter's advancing to the Nov. 7 general election.

At issue is a 1998 conviction for extortion that a Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court judge, per state law, expunged from Johnson's record.

The high court said in its dismissal Monday that Ed Davila, a White west side resident who filed the challenge after the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections in May rejected a similar challenge he filed, failed to file his brief or any evidence by July 27 as ordered.

Sources said yesterday that the attempt to oust Johnson, a licensed attorney who is Black and a clear Democrat like Jackson, Reed, and Patmon from the ballot, is frivolous.

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The county board of elections, upon the written recommendation of Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh, who stepped in for Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael O'Malley due to an alleged conflict of interest, voted unanimously, or 4-0, to reject the challenge brought by Davila, a suspended and former Stark County attorney.

Neighboring Summit County includes the city of Akron, the native home of Cleveland Cavaliers power forward and NBA megastar LeBron James.

The board of elections challenge said in part that the board of elections should usurp state law and brand extortion as bribery, a felony conviction not eligible to be expunged under state law in Ohio.

But Walsh said in her legal assessment that the board of elections had no such authority, and that it is clear that Johnson was convicted of extortion, not bribery

A former Akron assistant city prosecutor, Walsh is a Democrat like Johnson, and a no-nonsense prosecutor who last year was elected to a historical fifth term.

A Glenville councilman who was head of the Black student union and homecoming king in his college days at Kent State University, Johnson was convicted in late 1998 by a federal jury of Hobbs Act extortion for reportedly receiving some \$17,000 in campaign contributions from Arab-American grocers, in exchange for favors.

But the federal indictment did not charge Johnson with bribery. He was charged, in fact, with four counts of extortion and two counts of wire fraud.

The wire fraud counts were dismissed before trial and Johnson, who alleged entrapment to no avail, was convicted on three of the four extortion counts.

The councilman served nine months of a 15-month federal prison sentence.

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When the federal indictment came down Johnson, also a former city councilman, was a state senator in ambitious pursuit of the congressional seat vacated by the retirement of longtime 11th congressional district congressman Louis Stokes, a seat currently held by Marcia Fudge that went to the late Stephanie Tubbs- Jones of Cleveland, who was Black like Stokes and Fudge.

The Ohio Supreme Court restored Johnson's law license in 2009 and in 2010 he was again elected to city council.

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