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Dayton man disqualified in congressional race

OHIO NEWS | April 28, 2012

By Lynn Hulsey, Dayton Daily News

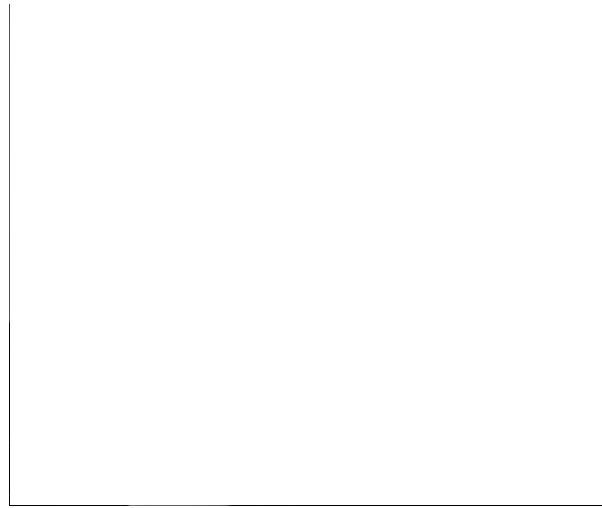
Petitions to be checked for fraudulent signatures

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One of 11 candidates for the 10th District congressional race was disqualified Tuesday and his petitions were forwarded to the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office for an investigation into whether they included fraudulent signatures.

The Montgomery County Board of Elections voted to disqualify Horace G. Crawford Jr. of Dayton who had filed petitions to run in the Democratic primary for the newly redrawn 10th congressional district seat.

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Crawford could not be reached for comment.

Board Director Steve Harsman said Crawford passed his own petitions and obtained seven valid signatures of the 25 required. Another 91 signatures did not match records showing the voter's true signature and appeared to be repeatedly written by the same person, said Harsman.

All other candidates' petitions filed for the 2012 primaries were certified for the ballot.

The remaining candidates in the 10th District race are:

- Republicans: U.S. Rep. Steve Austria, R-Beavercreek; U.S. Rep. Mike Turner, R-Centerville; John D. Anderson of Enon and Edward Breen of Kettering.
- Democrats: David Esrati of Dayton, Olivia Freeman of Fairborn, Michael Gardner of Jamestown, Ryan Steele of Beavercreek, L. Mack VanAllen of Centerville and Richard Scott Wharton of Amanda.



Also Tuesday, the board passed two new policies that grew out of a sheriff's office investigation earlier this year.

One policy bans the use of cell phones in the office by employees and requires that they be kept in pockets, purses or desks unless the employee has prior approval to use them.

Texting or taking photographs and videos in the office are banned.

The sheriff's investigation came after an anonymous letter was circulated by people claiming to be "concerned" board employees and alleging that the board had covered up the alleged failure to issue full ballots to some voters in 2006.

The anonymous allegation included copies of early versions of Election Night documents that Harsman said should not have been removed from the office. The board also found that a separate document was missing from a locked vault at the board office.

The sheriff's investigation found no wrongdoing by the board and found two former employees who admitted distributing the election documents. The sheriff's investigation also reported that a third former employee had been seen using her cell phone to take pictures and video in the office. No criminal charges were filed.

In approving the new cell phone policy, the board was concerned that voters' right to privacy could be violated by employees taking pictures or recording video of voter records that are supposed to remain secret, Harsman said, noting there is no indication that voters' privacy was violated.

"This is just another step in the continued effort to insure the integrity of (voter records)," said Harsman. The board also banned the removal of its documents by employees without specific permission from the director and deputy director.

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