

## **Ohio Secretary of State Husted Tries to Quash Democracy - Again**

*Breaks tie vote of Medina County Board of Elections in favor of oil and gas, against Medina residents*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BROADVIEW HEIGHTS, OHIO:** Yesterday, Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted decided in favor of the oil and gas industry yet again, refusing to allow Medina County residents to vote on their own County Charter initiative. The measure recognizes the people's right to govern their own communities, and bans shale gas fracking, depositing of oil/gas waste, withdrawal of county water for fracking and new infrastructure projects, such as the Nexus pipeline and compressor station.

The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF) has been working with Medina residents since 2014. Residents requested help as fracking pipelines threaten the County's clean air and water.

Last summer, Secretary Husted attempted to keep three County Charter measures off the ballot, including Medina. The Ohio Supreme Court slapped his hand, advising he had no authority to block the Charters based on their content and ruling on their constitutionality – the court made it clear that was a judicial function. The Court kept the measures off the ballot based on a technicality. CELDF assisted Medina County in rewriting their Charter to meet the Court's requirements.

Two weeks ago, the Medina County Board of Elections tied 2-2 in a vote that would have determined whether or not to advance the measure to the ballot. Tie votes and protests that are filed against any measure go to the Secretary of State for a decision.

Last year, Kathie Jones of Sustainable Medina County predicted the Secretary and the oil and gas industry would work to block future measures from the ballot. "Secretary Husted's decision comes as no surprise. He has worked on behalf of the oil and gas industry for years. We will not quit fighting for our inalienable right to local self-government and the right to protect our health, safety and welfare, even if that means amending the state constitution itself."

In Athens, Meigs and Portage Counties, the Board of Elections voted 4-0 to block similar County Charter initiatives. CELDF assisted residents in filing protests, which have also been submitted to Secretary Husted.

Tish O'Dell, CELDF's Ohio Community Organizer, stated, "People know they have an inalienable right to govern the places where they live. They know they have the right to clean air and water. They have a right to alter their government if they deem it necessary. As they continue to assert those rights, the

corporate state is clamping down - not just in Ohio, but in Pennsylvania, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and beyond. It will take a people's movement to change this. Ohioans are helping to build that movement.”

Since 2012, Ohio communities have been protecting themselves from fracking through CELDF-drafted Community Bills of Rights. Yellow Springs, Oberlin, Athens City and Broadview Heights adopted Community Bills of Rights in the last few years. These local laws codify community rights to self-governance and a healthy environment, and the rights of nature to exist and flourish – while prohibiting frack activities as a violation of those rights.

### **Ohio Communities Part of Growing Movement**

Ohio residents are advancing Community Rights as part of the broader Community Rights Movement building across the United States. Local communities and state Community Rights Networks are partnering with CELDF to advance fundamental democratic and environmental rights. They are working with CELDF to establish Community Rights and the Rights of Nature in law, and prohibit extraction, fracking, factory farming, water privatization, and other industrial activities as violations of those rights. Communities are joining together within and across states, working with CELDF to advance systemic change - recognizing our existing system of law and governance as inherently undemocratic and unsustainable.

### **Additional Information**

For additional information regarding petitioning communities, contact CELDF at [info@celdf.org](mailto:info@celdf.org). To learn about the Ohio Community Rights Network, visit [ohcommunityrights.org](http://ohcommunityrights.org). To learn about the Community Rights Movement, visit [www.celdf.org](http://www.celdf.org).

### **About CELDF — Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund**

The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit, public interest law firm providing free and affordable legal services to communities facing threats to their local environment, local agriculture, local economy, and quality of life. Its mission is to build sustainable communities by assisting people to assert their right to local self-government and the rights of nature.

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