



# ZACH KLEIN

COLUMBUS CITY ATTORNEY

eNewsletter

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## From the Desk of City Attorney Zach Klein

Over the past four years, we repositioned the City Attorney’s Office, giving Columbus a strong voice on the national stage on issues that directly affect the lives of our neighbors. When I came into office, I set an aggressive agenda that centered on what matters most, from protecting neighborhoods and promoting equitable justice to increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life for all who call Columbus home. As I begin my second term, these priorities remain the same.

In this newsletter, you can read about how:

- Each section of the City Attorney’s Office delivered major wins for city residents during my first term, reforming our criminal justice system, expanding social equity and protecting residents and consumers.
- The successes of the past four years are shaping my vision for the next term. When we started, we aimed high and delivered. But we know we have more work to do to ensure residents are protected no matter where they live.
- The staff at the City Attorney’s Office continues to fight for you, the residents of Columbus. The leadership, passion and dedication our staff brings to the job every day is remarkable and a reflection of their commitment to public service.

As your City Attorney, it’s an honor to serve you and your family, to share our successes and to keep you updated on what our office is doing every day to improve the lives of residents in our city. But I also want to hear from you. I want to encourage folks to continue contacting our office to let us know about what’s important to them. Please call 614.645.7385 or email [CityAttorney@columbus.gov](mailto:CityAttorney@columbus.gov) to share your thoughts on how we can better serve you.

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This is an e-publication of:  
**Columbus City Attorney**  
**Zach Klein**  
77 North Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Phone 614.645.7385  
Fax 614.645.6949  
[www.columbuscityattorney.org](http://www.columbuscityattorney.org)

## Aiming High: City Attorney's Office Delivers Wins for Residents

Since taking office in January 2018, Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein has worked to deliver on his platform of criminal justice reform, social equity and protections for residents and consumers.

In his first four years at the helm, the City Attorney's Office became a national model for proactive litigation protecting civil rights, a watchdog for consumers, a leader in reforming the criminal justice system, and an effective check on drugs and violent crime in Columbus neighborhoods.

"In our first term, we raised our profile to give Columbus a voice on the national stage, taking on abuses of power and fighting for city residents and consumers," said City Attorney Zach Klein. "We implemented innovative programs to make our criminal justice system more equitable, and reduced recidivism by connecting individuals in need with community resources, prioritizing treatment over jail time. We shut down a record-number of dangerous drug houses, took necessary steps to improve police-community relations and saved the Crew."

Under Klein's leadership, each section of the City Attorney's Office delivered major wins for city residents.

- The Zone Initiative acted aggressively to protect the safety and security of Columbus neighborhoods, shutting down dozens of drug houses and ensuring safe and sanitary living conditions at Columbus apartment complexes. The team worked with the Columbus Police Department to implement a community immersion program and established Project Taillight, a program that funds repairs for safety equipment on vehicles of low-income residents to reduce unnecessary police interactions. The Zone Initiative also established a program that funds home repairs for low-income seniors, allowing them to remain up to code and stay in their homes.
- The General Counsel section helped broker a deal to keep the Crew in Columbus, assisted in the formation and implementation of the Civilian Police Review Board, responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, and, along with cities and counties across the country, filed and pursued a lawsuit seeking to hold Opiate manufacturers and distributors accountable for the Opiate epidemic, leading to a historic statewide settlement agreement designed, via the OneOhio Recovery Foundation, to invest in opioid treatment and prevention programs at the local level.
- The Prosecution section handled over 10,000 criminal prosecutions each year during Klein's first term, including thousands of domestic violence and impaired driving cases. The division also created an innovative program to connect those with nonviolent offenses with opportunities for diversion rather than prosecution. That program saw a recidivism rate of less than 10 percent. Additionally, Klein changed bail recommendations for nonviolent, non-repeat offenders, freeing up space and resources for the city to focus on violent offenders awaiting trial and save taxpayer money.

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He also ended the prosecution of misdemeanor marijuana possession. Under Klein's leadership, Columbus was also one of six sites nationally selected for a grant program to assist officials in keeping firearms out of the hands of domestic violence offenders, and one of two cities nationally selected by the American Prosecutors Association to receive a grant to restore legitimacy and trust in the criminal justice system through creative and data-driven changes to prosecution, all with a focus on public safety.

- Under Klein, Columbus has also taken a more active role weighing in on national policy issues affecting Columbus residents, including litigation filed by the Solicitor General to challenge the Trump administration's attack on the Affordable Care Act. Columbus also joined as a plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging former President Trump's attempt to include citizenship status on the 2020 census, and successfully sued FirstEnergy over a multi-million dollar surcharge to Ohio consumers under House Bill 6, legislation at the heart of the largest public bribery and racketeering scandal in Ohio history.
- The Litigation section has successfully represented the City in large cases in state and federal court, notably winning a sweeping victory in 2019 to protect access to clean drinking water in Columbus.
- The Real Estate section closed on the sale of the \$3 million Scioto Peninsula Redevelopment Project and made critical purchases for more than \$12 million to invest and improve sewer and water infrastructure as Columbus continues to grow at record rates. Additionally, the section purchased millions of dollars' worth of future parkland to serve city residents, including the \$5.2 million purchase of 58 acres of greenspace in northwest Columbus to be turned into a new park.
- The Claims section worked to expand a mediation program to help Columbus residents reach resolutions that helped many reduce their tax liability without litigation. Mediation services are provided cost-free and allow taxpayers to avoid costs associated with a court case. The program has helped many Columbus residents find payment solutions without negatively impacting credit scores.
- In the wake of protests in downtown Columbus, City Attorney Klein worked to implement changes to the City's protest response procedures, including appointing special counsel to investigate and review police actions and street clearing procedures, as well as pushing to end the broad use of chemical agents against nonviolent protesters. Additionally, Klein worked collaboratively on systemic changes to improve police-community relations, including the creation of the Civilian Police Review Board, and moving charging decisions for alleged misdemeanor criminal offenses to the City Attorney's Office for review before they are filed. Klein and Mayor Andrew Ginther also invited the United States Department of Justice to Columbus to assist in changing and improving policies, practices and procedures of the Columbus Division of Police. The DOJ has accepted that invitation.

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## City Attorney Klein Looks Ahead to Second Term

After being sworn in for his second term in early January, Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein recently outlined a shortlist of priorities for the City Attorney's Office heading into the first year of the new term.

"Over the last four years, we aimed high and delivered, but we cannot rest on that historic success," said City Attorney Klein.

Among his priorities for a second term, City Attorney Klein listed:

- Focusing on deterring crime in Columbus neighborhoods,
- Shutting violent and drug-ridden properties,
- Continually improving policing in Columbus,
- Protecting residents, businesses, consumers and voters, and
- Expanding an innovative program to connect those with nonviolent offenses with opportunities for diversion rather than prosecution—a program that saw a recidivism rate of less than 10 percent since its creation in 2019.

"Our City still has challenges to meet, from public safety and police-community relations to voter and consumer protection," added Klein.

"If there is a way for us to get it done, we will. I'll continue to listen to the concerns of City residents and community leaders and work together to make the City Attorney's Office effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of our city."



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## In the Spotlight

**H**eidy Carr, Attorney in the Zone Initiative section, was recognized by the Capital Crossroads Special Improvement District board at their annual meeting in November. She received their annual Outstanding Service award for her continued work alongside Capital Crossroads SID and other community partners to address public nuisances in downtown Columbus. Through her hard work, the City has cracked down on dangerous properties and helped keep our community safe for downtown residents, workers and visitors. Congratulations, Heidy!



## On the Move

In January, City Attorney Zach Klein announced Meredith Tucker as his Chief of Staff. Tucker joined the City of Columbus in 2017 and worked alongside City Attorney Klein throughout his first term, serving as Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications and Policy. She brings more than a decade of experience working in Ohio government, statewide and presidential elections, with an extensive background in policy and strategic communications. In 2020, Tucker served as Deputy State Director and Communications Director for President Biden's campaign in Ohio.

