



# ZACH KLEIN

COLUMBUS CITY ATTORNEY

eNewsletter

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## From the Desk of City Attorney Zach Klein

I have always advocated for partnerships, collaboration, and collegiality. There's strength in numbers, wisdom in learning from others, and efficiency and efficacy in sharing resources. We can accomplish so much more when we work together and focus on our common interests instead of the differences that divide us.

That's why I'm always willing to reach across the aisle to achieve shared goals, or extend a hand to help other agencies—whether they be local, state or federal. Politics may seem like a dirty word in today's society, but it comes from the Greek word *politikos*, which means, "[of, for, or relating to citizens](#)." It's also related to being civil and courteous.

That's why it's so important for those in public life to remember that it is our job to work on behalf of all our residents, in pursuit of the greater good to keep our neighborhoods safe, promote economic progress for all, and protect the most vulnerable among us.

Last week saw the culmination of months of planning and coordination when I joined U.S. Attorney Benjamin C. Glassman, and representatives from the Columbus Division of Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to announce a new initiative in which federal and local prosecutors will work together with law enforcement and domestic violence victim services agencies to target dangerous domestic abusers who illegally possess firearms. Since becoming City Attorney, one of my highest priorities has been keeping guns out of the hands of criminals to help protect the lives of domestic violence victims and law enforcement. We're grateful for this new partnership, which will better help us protect our friends and neighbors from dangerous criminals with guns and make our community a safer place for everyone to live.

In this edition of our e-newsletter, you'll also be able read about our continuing collaboration with the Franklin County Sheriff's office and the joint taskforce that is working to root out human trafficking rings that are operating inside local massage parlors. We also continued our longstanding partnership with the Columbus Division of Police to shut down five more drug houses in a series of coordinated raids in the last month.

Finally, I would like to thank the Columbus Metropolitan Club for inviting me, Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, Ohio Senate President Larry Obhoff, and others to discuss our bipartisan efforts to overhaul Ohio's drug sentencing laws to increase public safety and reduce recidivism by focusing on the root causes of crime and addiction.

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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)

## Local, Federal Partnership

On May 28th, City Attorney Klein and U.S. Attorney Benjamin C. Glassman held a press conference to announce their joint initiative aimed at enhancing collaboration among law enforcement agencies and domestic violence victim service providers, as well as identifying and prosecuting domestic violence abusers who possess guns.

As part of this new multi-jurisdictional effort, City Attorney Klein and U.S.

Attorney Glassman detailed indictments issued in federal court earlier that day against three Columbus residents. Each was charged with illegally possessing a firearm after being convicted previously of domestic violence-related crimes.

In separate indictments, a federal grand jury charged Eldon G. Draper, 45, Stephon A. Moore, 30, and Brandon N. Zachariah, 26, with possessing firearms and/or ammunition after being previously convicted of felony crimes.

According to court documents, on April 13, 2019 Draper possessed a Smith & Wesson .38 special firearm and five rounds of ammunition. He had already been convicted in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas of misdemeanor domestic violence, felonious assault, aggravated assault, arson, four offenses of aggravated arson, receiving stolen property, and theft.

Moore allegedly possessed a 9mm firearm and 16 rounds of ammunition on May 13, 2019. He was previously convicted in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas of misdemeanor domestic violence, felonious assault, and attempted robbery. Police reports detail that Moore shot at the gas tank of his partner's car and also threatened others with a gun, stating, "I'm not playing around. I will be back and I'm always strapped."

According to Zachariah's indictment, on March 20, 2019 he possessed a pistol and 22 rounds of ammunition. Zachariah was previously convicted of felonious assault in Franklin County. In that case, he strangled his victim to the point that she vomited and feared he was going to kill her. Columbus Police reports also indicate that Zachariah has been involved in multiple domestic violence incidents over the past five years.

Possessing a firearm or ammunition as a convicted felon is a federal crime punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Individuals who have been convicted of domestic violence or have an active protection order are prohibited from possessing a firearm.

Last year, the City of Columbus adopted several ordinances that made dozens of technical and substantive changes to the city's criminal codes related to firearms offenses, including laws to prohibit convicted domestic abusers and other violent felons from possessing firearms. The new domestic violence firearms provisions conformed city code to match the already existing federal prohibitions.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan J.C. Grey and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Melanie Tobias with the City Attorney's office are the prosecutors jointly assigned to the cases. As the Department of Justice notes, indictments merely contain allegations, and defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.



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**Zach Klein**  
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## City Attorney, Sheriff Team Up Again

Last week, City Attorney Klein and Franklin County Sheriff Dallas Baldwin announced that their offices' joint efforts led to an emergency court order to immediately vacate and shutter a north side massage parlor that investigators say was a front for illegal sex acts. It's the second time in two months that the City Attorney and Sheriff have partnered to use civil litigation authorized under Ohio's nuisance abatement code to shut down a potential human trafficking ring. In April, a judge granted the joint task force's request to [board up](#) the Sunflower Asian Spa on the city's far west side. The City Attorney's office also helped advise the City of Hilliard when it filed similar nuisance cases against two other illegal massage parlors.

In a hearing held in the Franklin County Environmental Court, city attorneys requested an *ex parte* temporary restraining order to board up Purple Clouds Spa, located at 5322 North High Street, near the border between Columbus and Worthington. In a surprise raid following the hearing, city and county agents enforced the judge's order, evacuating the premises and boarding it up. Representatives from [Asian American Community Services](#) were onsite to assist any of the workers who were in need of help.

Detectives from the Sheriff's special investigations unit began investigating the spa in February for potential prostitution and human trafficking after finding the business listed on a website known to rate Asian spas based upon which were the "best establishments to visit for possible sexual favors."

According to court documents, investigators obtained consistent evidence that sexual conduct in exchange for money was occurring regularly at the premises from the point of their investigation on February 27, 2019 through the latest covert operation at the end of May.

Patrons paid \$60 upfront for an hour-long massage and were led to a dimly lit back room. The patrons were then asked to remove all their clothing and lie down. During the course of the massage, workers would begin to perform illegal sex acts, with one individual offering an undercover detective a coupon for \$5 off his next visit. Detectives also noted that they never observed any signage inside the premises stating "No Sexual Activity."

Xiaohong Jiang of Hilliard is listed as the agent for Purple Clouds Spa, Inc., which is registered with the City of Columbus as the massage license holder. The next hearing is scheduled for June 10, 2019. If the property is ultimately declared to be a statutorily defined public nuisance, state law grants the court authority to order the premises shut down for up to one year following the permanent injunction hearing.



**"We're going to continue to be aggressive in going after these businesses that are nothing more than illegal fronts for human trafficking and prostitution. I want to thank the Sheriff's office for working with us on these cases, and hope that we're sending a message to the rest of the bad operators out there: our task force is looking for you and if you don't clean up your act, it's only a matter time before we find you and shut you down."**

**Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein**

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 Zach Klein**  
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## Community Action

On May 15, the City of Columbus set precedent by striking down three west side drug houses in one day—including two on the same street—in a series of coordinated police raids after city attorneys secured emergency court orders to immediately evacuate and board up the premises. Just last week, our attorneys obtained additional court orders against two more drug houses—bringing the city’s total to 11 shut down so far this year.

All told, the five properties were the scene of close to 150 police runs for domestic violence, narcotics complaints, suicide attempts, shots fired, drug overdoses, fighting, burglary, stolen vehicles, alleged prostitution, and more. The owner of one of the properties overdosed on heroin three out of the nine times officers and paramedics were called to the premises to try to revive unresponsive victims.

**65 N. Chase Ave.** Columbus Police responded to this property at least 58 times in the last two years for complaints that included domestic violence, suicide attempts, shots fired, theft, drug overdoses, fighting, narcotics complaints, burglary, suspicious persons, a person with a knife almost “the size of a sword,” and other disturbances. After a series of other incidents at the premises, including several fugitive arrests on active warrants, narcotics detectives began conducting covert purchases of heroin and crack cocaine earlier this year.

**437 S. Warren Ave.** Officers responded to this property more than 30 times in the last two years for complaints ranging from drug trafficking to domestic violence and a person with a gun. During an incident in late 2017 when paramedics arrived to treat someone in cardiac arrest, the owner of the property admitted that his sister was selling drugs from the premises. Officers made several drug-related arrests at the property throughout 2018. This March, narcotics detectives executing a search warrant seized crack cocaine and arrested two out the 18 individuals they found inside the premises at the time. Detectives executed a second search warrant in May and arrested seven out of 18 people once again found inside the premises on various outstanding felony and misdemeanor warrants.

**589 S. Warren Ave.** In April 2018, officers responded to a reported drug overdose and found an unconscious victim lying on the bathroom floor with a syringe and tie-off cord nearby. The victim was revived with a total of three doses of Narcan. Police subsequently received a community complaint that as many as 30-50 cars a day approached the premises to purchase drugs. Detectives began surveillance of the property and conducted several covert purchases of heroin and crack cocaine. In April this year, officers arrested an individual who told officers that it was common for buyers to exchange guns for drugs at the property. The drug dealers allegedly then sold the guns as well.

**1717 Union Ave.** Police responded to this property at least 28 times in the last year and a half for complaints that included domestic violence, shots fired, theft, drug overdoses, narcotics complaints, burglary, suspicious persons, stolen vehicles, and other disturbances. Last year officers investigating a report of a stolen vehicle discovered heroin, 526 grams of crystal meth, digital scales, a meth pipe, two syringes, and a glass jar containing a white residue. Detectives conducting covert surveillance of the premises this year have sized black tar heroin, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, psilocybin mushrooms, and ammunition.

**936 Elizabeth Ave.** Officers have responded to this property numerous times in the last two years for complaints including drug trafficking, burglary, robbery, assault, shots fired, and least nine drug overdoses. On three occasions during a two month time span last year, the owner overdosed on heroin and had to be revived by paramedics. Officers and paramedics also were dispatched to the premises on reports of unresponsive drug overdose victims on: October 16, 2018; February 17, 2019; April 5, 2019; April 9, 2019; May 19, 2019; and May 21, 2019.

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Scenes from the Columbus Metropolitan Club luncheon where City Attorney Klein joined a bipartisan panel moderated by Karen Kasler to discuss state legislation aimed at updating Ohio's criminal justice system. (Photos courtesy of CMC.)



City Attorney Klein was honored to join so many members from different corners of our Columbus community for MY Project USA's Interfaith Ramadan Iftar last month.

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