

Statement from Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Bill Mason on His Departure from Elected Office; Becomes Partner at Bricker & Eckler LLP

After nearly fourteen years, I will be leaving my position as Cuyahoga County Prosecutor on September 30, 2012. Serving the community in this position has been a deeply humbling and rewarding experience. It has been an honor and privilege to work with the thousands of police officers and law enforcement agencies, hundreds of assistant prosecutors, countless community groups and leaders and the 57 municipalities of our great county.

On October 1, 2012, I will join the Cleveland office of the law firm of Bricker & Eckler LLP as a Partner. Working with Bricker's public sector clients in their Public Finance Group is a natural fit for me and I am excited about continuing to work with public entities. I will be focusing on assisting the firm's public sector clients – including municipalities, counties, school districts and other governmental agencies – with the challenges they face, including a growing trend toward consolidation, shared services and other forms of collaboration to address fiscal responsibility and greater accountability.

Upon taking office in 1999, I had three goals: take a tough stance on crime; create a community-based prosecution unit; and operate an efficient, effective and transparent office.

First, I vowed to take a tough stance on crime. My office has prosecuted over 200,000 criminal cases with a 92% conviction rate—the national average is 68%. Part of this success has come from the Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, which I created in Northeast Ohio in 2000. In 2003, I was approached by the U.S. Department of Justice and asked to expand the Task Force statewide and to assume the role as Chairperson. The Task Force, comprised of volunteer law enforcement officers throughout Ohio, has searched for, investigated and prosecuted countless defendants preying on our children through the Internet. My office's ICAC Unit has a 100% conviction rate.

Second, I sought to establish a community-based prosecution model in the criminal division. I believed having the community involved in assisting police officers and my office would improve our ability to prosecute criminals. We first implemented this model of prosecution in the City of East Cleveland. Since the inception of this model, my office has evolved over the years and has been completely restructured into a county-wide, community-based prosecution unit.

Third, I wanted to create an efficient and effective prosecutor's office. When I first entered this office in 1999, the computers did not have email or Internet capability, and only a handful were networked. With the advancement of technology, I sought innovative ways to eliminate paper, secure grants to fund crime-fighting initiatives, and revamp the county's justice system. In 1999, it took on average of 87 days from arrest to indictment, while today the average is 21 days. Based upon the average case load handled by my staff, my office is the most efficient prosecutor's office in the state and one of the most technologically advanced offices in the nation. The Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office now has a reputation for being accessible and transparent, from making public records easily available to working with community groups to publishing a weekly list of court watch cases to the media and our community.

I want to thank the citizens of this county for electing me to office, placing their trust and faith in me, and always warmly welcoming me and my staff into their communities.