

Toledo Residents Told to Foot the Bill for Democratically Enacted Lake Erie Bill of Rights

Toledo City Council to vote on a closed-door agreement granting attorney fees of \$207,500 to a corporate agricultural entity

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Toledoans for Safe Water (TSW)

Markie Miller

Crystal Jankwoski

safewatertoledo@gmail.com

419-665-3743

Toledo, OH: The Columbus law firm of Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease, LLP is seeking \$207,500 in attorney fees from the City of Toledo. The corporate law firm, charging \$500/hour, filed a federal lawsuit representing Drewes Farms Partnerships against the City of Toledo hours after voters passed LEBOR.

At the September 1st and 8th council meetings, Toledo Council members will review and vote on an ordinance authorizing the payment of attorney fees to the corporate plaintiff.

Toledo Jobs and Growth Coalition, a corporate shadow PAC that was funded by British Petroleum, spent over \$300,000 to oppose LEBOR at the polls. When unsuccessful, Drewes filed their lawsuit claiming they were “harmed” by the vote 12 hours after the polls closed. The State of Ohio joined the lawsuit on the side of the corporate entity, against residents and Lake Erie.

Terry Lodge, an attorney for the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, said, “Drewes brought the lawsuit under 42 U.S. Code Section 1983, a federal civil rights law, the same law that George Floyd’s family will file suit under in Minnesota. This decision puts ‘corporate civil rights’ violations legally on a par with human beings whose lives were senselessly lost by excessive police force.”

“Corporate interests and the state of Ohio are trying to make an example out of communities who threaten their power—but Toledoans refuse to be punished for taking steps to protect our water and assert our rights. We remember the Water Crisis of 2014,” said Markie Miller of TSW.

“There is a pattern emerging of punishing communities who push for a change to protect Nature. This is similar to [Grant Township, PA](#) being slapped with attorney fees for passing a local Rights of Nature law.”

“Judge Zouhary prohibited TSW, the sponsors of the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, from participating in any of the court proceedings. Now Toledoans should pay the bill from an expensive law firm that represented the agricultural industry? This one needs to go back to the drawing board,” said Mike Ferner of Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie.

CALL TO ACTION:

LEBOR garnered worldwide attention when passed in 2019. Now Toledoans for Safe Water are asking people supporting the Rights of Nature movement to contact Toledo City Council prior to the September 1st and September 8th meetings. Tell them *not* to punish the people of Toledo for being leaders in this global movement. The planet needs more communities to follow TSW’s lead and not be intimidated by corporate bullies.

Matt Cherry - Matt.Cherry@toledo.oh.gov

Theresa Gadus - Theresa.Gadus@toledo.oh.gov

Sam Melden - Sam.Melden@toledo.oh.gov

Chris Delaney - Chris.Delaney@toledo.oh.gov

Cecelia Adams - Cecelia.Adams@toledo.oh.gov

Nick Komives - Nick.Komives@toledo.oh.gov

Rob Ludeman - Rob.Ludeman@toledo.oh.gov

Katie Moline - Katie.Moline@toledo.oh.gov

City Council: 419-245-1050

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