



## Ohio Supreme Court candidate John O'Donnell broke 'clean campaign' pledge with negative ad, Ohio State Bar Association says



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COLUMBUS, Ohio -- The Ohio State Bar Association on Thursday asked Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge John P. O'Donnell to stop running a negative TV ad against his Ohio Supreme Court race opponent, Justice Judith L. French. John P. O'Donnell  
Candidate photo

The association's ad monitoring committee determined O'Donnell broke his promise to run a clean campaign with the 30-second spot that began airing this week.

O'Donnell, a Democrat, and French, a Republican, signed a "clean campaign pledge" to refrain from running ads that "impugn the integrity of the judicial system or the integrity of a candidate for Supreme Court, or that erode the public's trust and confidence in the independence and impartiality of the judiciary by verbally or visually attempting to lead voters to believe that a candidate will decide in a predetermined manner."

O'Donnell's campaign began running [its first ad earlier this week](#). The ad's narrator claims French is "in the pocket of big utilities" and shows French's picture in front of \$20 bills.

**The narrator says:** "French supported an unfair ruling that gave American Electric Power \$368 million of our money. No wonder French has pocketed 48 contributions from utility employees and executives."

The association's Judicial Election Campaign Advertising Monitoring Committee found the ad violates that pledge.

"While there may be a perception that justice is for sale, this is simply not the case," committee chairperson Maxine Thomas said in a letter sent to O'Donnell.

"The committee now asks you to immediately remove this ad from the air, and refrain from including statements that impugn the court's integrity and imply that justice is for sale in your campaign materials. Ohioans are better served by learning about judicial candidate qualifications and experience."

Ohio Democratic Party Deputy Communications Director Brian Hester said the O'Donnell campaign never received notice of a complaint or a hearing before issuing its findings.

"As a lawyer, I am confused how this process has any validity when it apparently hears complaints from campaign opponents and issues findings with no notice to the other candidate until after the fact," Hester said in an email. "Regardless, this committee has no legal standing to ask for this factual ad to be taken down. The ad merely references what multiple papers have noted is very troubling about Gov. Kasich's appointee's short record on the Court."

Hester said the association should address [comments by French, reported by the Columbus Dispatch, that she's a "backstop" for Republican-drafted legislation](#).



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