



Via Electronic Mail

March 3, 2021

Anthony B. Giardini, Chairman
Lorain County Democratic Party Executive Committee
3660 Morningside Way, Unit 101
Lorain, Ohio 44053

Re: Lorain County Board of Elections Appointment

Dear Chairman Giardini:

I received the Lorain County Democratic Party Executive Committee's January 31, 2021 recommendation to appoint Sharon A. Sweda to the Lorain County Board of Elections for a full term, beginning March 1, 2021.

When a member's term of office on a board of elections expires, the Revised Code provides that the county executive committee of the party entitled to the appointment may recommend a qualified elector to fill such vacancy, and the Secretary of State "shall appoint such elector, unless the Secretary of State has reason to believe the elector would not be a competent member of such board."¹ According to the Ohio Supreme Court, "[t]he Secretary has discretion to determine the competence of a recommended candidate . . ."² "Competence" to serve involves qualities beyond intelligence, integrity, and dedication to professionally performing one's duty. It also includes the basic ability to get along with co-workers and inspire confidence in the election system.³

As the state's chief election officer, it is my duty to administer free and fair elections in our state, and this duty includes the appointment of board of elections members to serve as my representatives in overseeing elections in each county. This is a responsibility that I take very seriously. After carefully considering this recommendation for appointment, I determined that Sharon Sweda would not be a competent member of the Lorain County Board of Elections.

In support of this determination, we offer the following reasons for denying the appointment to the Board. My Office received information that suggests Sharon Sweda misused county resources to campaign during her bid for re-election for Lorain County Commissioner for the November 3, 2020 General Election. It appears that Sharon Sweda used her Lorain County official email account in furtherance of her bid for re-election. Additionally, she may have directed subordinates to

¹ R.C. 3501.07.

² *State ex rel. Lawrence Cty. Republican Party*, 119 Ohio St.3d 92, 2008-Ohio-3753, 892 N.E.2d 428, ¶ 13

³ *State ex rel. Lucas Cty. Republican Party Exec. Comm. v. Husted*, 2015-Ohio-3948, 144 Ohio St. 3d 352, 43 N.E.3d 411, ¶ 27.

directly or indirectly campaign for her while on county time. The Auditor of State issued a cease-and-desist order pertaining to the allegations, which suggests that Sharon Sweda may have violated Ohio Ethics and Campaign Laws.

The totality of these facts and circumstances lead me to the conclusion that Ms. Sweda has not demonstrated the judgement and adequate level of integrity necessary to ensure voter confidence at the Lorain County Board of Elections. Therefore, I reject the Executive Committee's recommendation of Sharon Sweda for the term beginning March 1, 2021 on the Lorain County Board of Elections. The Executive Committee may recommend another candidate for appointment no later than March 12, 2021. If the Executive Committee fails to do so, I will select the new board member.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose
Ohio Secretary of State

cc: Paul Adams, Director of the Lorain County Board of Elections
James Kramer, Deputy Director of the Lorain County Board of Elections