

ACLU SCORES IMPORTANT LEGAL VICTORIES

Two recent court decisions established important civil liberties principles for Ohio citizens. The ACLU provided legal counsel in both cases.

Gross v. Cleveland Heights involved a dispute over whether a local municipality may ban political signs from residential property.

In 1988, Abby Gross was cited by the city of Cleveland Heights for displaying a sign for a presidential candidate in her yard. With the help of the ACLU, she sued the city in federal courts. Many of her neighbors, long-time residents of the city, supported her claim by providing affidavits for the case.

In March of this year, the U.S. District Court in Cleveland ruled the ordinance was a violation of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment and the Ohio Constitution's free speech clause. The city has appealed the ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

This is the second time that Ohio ACLU prevailed in a political sign case. Twenty years ago, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in Peltz v. City of South Euclid that the placing of political signs on private property by homeowners is protected speech.

The lawyers in the *Gross* case were Gordon Beggs, Lois Robinson, and Steve Gard.

In the Adoption of Charles B., the Ohio Supreme Court ruled this past March that the language of Ohio's adoption statute provides that any person approved by a local trial court may adopt. The Court further stated that there is no policy in Ohio law prohibiting a gay person from adopting.

The ruling cleared the way for the Court to review the record of the original adoption hearing. A Columbus therapist, who is a homosexual, had requested approval to adopt a young boy with leukemia. The boy was abandoned by his parents when he was three and had lived in a series of foster homes prior to the adoption request.

The Licking County Juvenile Court approved the adoption, but it was overturned on an appeal by the Licking County Human Services Department.

The Supreme Court ruled that the trial court had acted properly in approving the adoption. It said that adoptions must be judged on a case-by-case basis in order to determine what is in the best interests of the child. In this case, the Court said it reached "the inescapable conclusion" that the adoption was right.

The ACLU amicus brief in the case, which supported the therapist's right to adopt Charles B., was prepared by Denise Mirman, with assistance from David Goldberger, Ohio ACLU General Counsel.

WISH LIST for ACLU OFFICES

Your generosity is unquestioned. Our needs must seem unending. But our goal in upgrading offices and equipment is to more efficiently (read: at lower cost) provide you top-of-the-line civil liberties services.

What would make our job easier? The following is a list of equipment needs culled from staff and volunteers at the three Ohio offices:

- IBM-compatible PC equipment
- Office-sized refrigerator
- FAX machines

As always, all items donated to the Ohio ACLU Foundation are tax deductible. If you have any donations or questions, please call Myra Neylon, Columbus, 614-228-8951.