

# Coventry Township Board of Trustees

## Position Statement: Political Yard Signs

11APR13

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution prohibits abridging the freedom of speech.

It is the position of the Coventry Township Board of Trustees that this protection, provided in the Bill of Rights, includes political yard signs. Both the Ohio and U.S. Supreme Courts have acknowledged the special importance of yard signs in our political world.

Further, the right to put up a political sign and the right to restrict signs based on their unsightly appearance—or political differences—are not equal rights. Some mistakenly think all rights are equal and carry equal weight. All rights are not equal. Some rights are more important than other rights and when there is a conflict between the more important rights and the less important rights, the less important rights have to give in. Rights have hierarchies and free speech is at the top.

Coventry Township shall promulgate and follow these enforcement responsibilities and guidelines:

### **ENFORCEMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

#### Traffic Safety

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is responsible for the state's U.S. routes, state routes and interstates; and, right-of-way violations in those areas shall be referred to ODOT and the Summit County Sheriff's office or the Ohio State Patrol when there is a serious traffic safety issue.

The Summit County Engineer's office is responsible for right-of-way on county roads; and, right-of-way violations in those areas shall be referred to the Summit County Sheriff's office, when there is a serious traffic safety issue.

The Township is responsible for right-of-way on township roads; and, right-of-way violations in those areas shall be referred to Coventry Highway Department and to the Summit County Sheriff's office, when there is a serious traffic safety issue.

The property owner is responsible for signs placed on their property; and traffic safety issues on private property shall be referred to the Summit County Sheriff's office.

#### Content/Disclaimer

Complaints against the content, or lack of content, found in political/campaign material should be directed to the Summit County Board of Elections.

#### Permission to Display

Complaints of signs not having the permission of the property owner should be directed to the property owner for resolution.

## **POLITICAL YARD SIGN GUIDELINES**

- Permission to place a sign on private property must be obtained from the owner of that property.
- Signs may not be placed on township-owned property without the permission of the Board of Trustees by official resolution (e.g. administrative office, sheriff's office, town hall, clock tower, senior center, and parks.) Generally, the Township reserves this permission to township-sponsored issues.
- Signs should be placed in a location that does not create traffic safety issues (typically, this is line-of-sight of oncoming traffic/hazards).
- Signs may not be placed within any road right of way (typically that would be closer to the road than the telephone poles).
- Signs may not be on telephone poles, street sign posts, guardrails, etc.
- Signs properly placed cannot be limited in quantity or size.
- Signs should be maintained and replaced if deteriorated or unsightly.
- Political material should have a disclaimer on the material that informs the reader of who is responsible for the message contained in the political material. Information on disclaimer requirements can be obtained at the Summit County Board of Elections.

### **Contact Information**

Summit County Sheriff 330.643.2181

Ohio Department of Transportation District IV 330.786.3100

Summit County Engineer 330.643.2850

Coventry Road Department 330.644.0785

Summit County Board of Elections 330.643.5200