

# METRO

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## Voters to decide whether mayor can appoint fire chief, top staff

Safety director says real issue is accountability

LEILA ATASSI  
Plain Dealer Reporter

Cleveland voters will decide whether Mayor Frank Jackson should have the power to appoint the city's fire chief and the chief's

command staff — an important step, Jackson's administrators say, toward ending decades of systemic payroll abuses within the Fire Department.

In a 14-5 vote, the City Council passed legislation Wednesday authorizing the proposed charter change to appear on the Nov. 6 ballot. Council members Kevin Kelley, Jay Westbrook, Martin Keane, Tony Brancatelli and Dona Brady voted against the proposal.

If voters approve the measure,

Jackson will be empowered to appoint the chief, three deputy chiefs and an executive officer from either the department ranks or from outside the department.

The chief's command staff, however, must be selected from a list of candidates recommended by the chief.

The deputy chiefs would be new positions created to add a layer of supervision to the seven assistant chiefs currently in place, Safety Director Martin Flask told council

members during a committee-of-the-whole meeting Wednesday.

Now, candidates for supervisory positions within the department — including the chief — must take an exam and win approval from the city's Civil Service Commission to fill those jobs.

All but the chief and the executive officer are unionized.

The mayor already appoints the police chief, deputy police chiefs and police commanders.

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## Commentary

MARGARET BERNSTEIN



## Dancer aspires, then gives back

Since the day Nehemiah Spencer entered the Cleveland School of the Arts in 2003, he's been surprising his mom, Callie Taylor.

And what a journey they've been on together. It started when Spencer, a sixth-grader, told her he wanted to study dance.

Mom didn't like the idea at all.

"My boy is not going to be in no tights," Taylor, 50, remembers thinking. Spencer, the youngest of her four boys, had always danced around the house, jumping and doing splits, but she was no arts aficionado, and she couldn't understand his newfound love for ballet and modern dance.

Eventually she came around, after seeing her son develop discipline and graceful dance skills as he studied with dance department co-director Terence Greene.

"Once he got into dance and he started progressing, and I was looking at what he could do, that stereotype went out the window. I had to stand behind my child," she says.

And that she did.

Soon she became the school's unofficial dance mom, hauling students and their costumes to rehearsals and performances. Taylor fed the young dancers when they were hungry and counseled some about problems they faced at home and school. She got up the courage to take her first plane ride, to chaperone dance students on a trip to Dallas.

No matter how many dancers she squeezed into her minivan — she believes her record is 14 — Taylor always refused gas money.

Her reward, she says, was seeing the kids enjoying their dance talent and sharing it. "As long as they were happy and out of the streets, doing something I knew was positive, I didn't mind doing it."

Although she once feared "having to take flak" from relatives and friends who think dancing isn't manly, Taylor got to the point where she invited everyone she knew to Spencer's shows.

"I'm proud of who he is," she reflects now. She admires the tremendous work ethic she's seen take root in her 21-year-old son as he reaches for the top rungs of the dance world. When he falls short, he always gets up to try again.

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## Riding a wave of arms and emotions



JOSHUA GUNTER | THE PLAIN DEALER

A crowd surfer approaches the front of the stage Wednesday during a performance by the band Yellowcard at the Vans Warped Tour at Blossom Music Center in Cuyahoga Falls. The Vans Warped Tour is a daylong festival at which alternative music and extreme sports collide. It showcases dozens of performers, including Cleveland rapper Machine Gun Kelly. Go to [tinyurl.com/pdphotoblog](http://tinyurl.com/pdphotoblog) for a photo gallery from the tour.

## Man killed by store owner had been there before

DOUG BROWN  
Plain Dealer Reporter

The man shot and killed by an East Side store owner during a suspected armed robbery Tuesday was supposed to have been in a Cleveland halfway house, finishing a sentence for an armed robbery committed outside the same store more than three years ago.

Jonathan Ward, 23, entered Abe & Son's Corner Store at East 70th Street and Cedar Avenue about 1:50 p.m. Tuesday and tried to rob the owner, Jamal Sulaiman, 35, police said. Dur-

ing a struggle, Sulaiman was shot in the arm. Ward was shot in the head and torso and died in the store.

Ward was arrested by U.S. marshals in November 2009 in an armed robbery outside Abe & Son's in February of that year, in which the victim's cash, cellphone and bag of groceries were taken. He was sentenced to prison for more than two years on robbery, drug and weapons charges.

On May 2, Ward was released from prison and entered Oriana House on East 55th Street to serve the final months of his sentence. It is common

for inmates to spend the last six months of their sentence at halfway houses, said Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction spokesman Mike Davis.

But Ward left the facility, and parole officers declared him a "violinist at large" on June 22. Since then, Davis said, local law enforcement agencies had been looking for him.

Sulaiman was treated at Metro-Health Medical Center for the gunshot wound to his right arm and was released later Tuesday. Abe & Son's was closed Wednesday, with yellow

police crime scene tape around the building. Cleveland police officers were keeping close watch, parked on both sides of the corner property.

Sulaiman took over the store after his brother, Kamal, then 34, was shot in the head and killed there during a December 2008 armed robbery.

The Cuyahoga County prosecutor's office said Wednesday night that homicide detectives were still investigating Ward's death.

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## Derailment, blast evacuate neighborhood in Columbus

THEODORE DECKER  
The Columbus Dispatch

COLUMBUS — Federal transportation investigators have started their probe into Wednesday's fiery train derailment just south of the state fairgrounds.

Two people were reported injured and about 100 residents of the nearby Weinland Park neighborhood had to be evacuated after the southbound Norfolk Southern train went off the tracks just after 2 a.m., triggering tank cars containing 90,000 gallons of ethanol to catch fire and explode.

Officials said the two people who were injured had walked onto the tracks to see what happened when the explosion occurred. They drove themselves to a hospital, and emergency officials classified their injuries as minor.

There are no long-term health problems that area residents should



ANDREW SPEAR | ASSOCIATED PRESS

People watch the flames from a freight train that derailed early Wednesday morning in Columbus. Nearby residents were evacuated but were allowed to return to their homes later in the day.

be concerned with, according to officials handling the cleanup. Residents within a 1-mile radius of the derailment were evacuated in the middle of the night. The zone was later reduced to a quarter-mile and all displaced residents were allowed home by mid-afternoon Wednesday.

A 10-person team from the Na-

tional Transportation Safety Board arrived in the afternoon and went straight to the scene. Local firefighters, meanwhile, continued to keep an eye on the burning cars while dousing occasional brush fires that ignited near the tracks throughout the afternoon.

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## VA program to keep care more under primary doctor

CASEY CAPACHI  
Plain Dealer Reporter

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced a program Wednesday that with the help of telemedicine could eventually allow thousands of veterans to be treated in their local communities for complex illnesses such as heart failure, chronic pain and hepatitis C.

SCAN-ECHO, or Specialty Care Access Network-Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes, is an expansion of Project ECHO, a program that started at the University of New Mexico in 2004 as a way to connect rural residents with medical specialists.

"The bottom line is we would like to provide care where the patient is rather than having to be referred to a medical center, which can be a bit of a drive," said Dr. Rajiv Jain, the VA's chief patient care services officer.

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## THE PLAIN DEALER PolitiFact Ohio

## Renacci didn't get prostitution money



"Foreign Chinese prostitution money is allegedly behind the groups funding Congressman Jim Renacci's Republican majority."

Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee

SABRINA EATON  
Plain Dealer Bureau

Billionaire Las Vegas casino owner Sheldon Adelson donates millions of dollars to Republican causes. A fired former employee of Adelson's filed a lawsuit that alleges Adelson personally approved of prostitution at properties his company owns in Macau, a former Portuguese colony near Hong Kong that now is part of China.

Adelson vigorously denies those allegations. What does any of that have to do with Rep. Jim Renacci?

Even though Federal Election Commission records show that Adelson has never donated to Renacci, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee tried to use the casino owner's legal woes against the Medina County congressman with a provocatively titled press release: "Congressman Renacci's Re-election Funded by Chinese Prostitution Money?"

"Foreign Chinese prostitution money is allegedly behind the groups funding Congressman Jim Renacci's Republican majority," the DCCC claimed in a news release on July 2.

"What will Congressman Jim Renacci do when his Chinese prostitution money comes from billionaire Sheldon Adelson?" it continued, urging Renacci to "reject the support of these groups funded by money from a Chinese prostitution strategy."

As a result of redistricting, Renacci, a Republican from Wadsworth, Ohio, is pitted against Rep. Betty Sutton, a Democrat. That makes him a target for the DCCC. The DCCC release noted that Adelson and his wife, Miriam, gave \$5 million to the Congressional Leadership Fund Super PAC, which is backed by House Speaker John Boehner and other GOP leaders. FEC records indicate that Super PAC hasn't spent anything so far.

The Adelsons also gave more than \$60,000 to the Republican counterpart of the DCCC, the National Republican Congressional Committee, during the past election cycle. The NRCC regularly sends out news releases that attack Sutton, who is from Copley Township.

When we asked Renacci campaign spokesman James Slepian about the DCCC's claim that the congressman's re-election might somehow be funded by Chinese prostitution money, Slepian replied that there is "no money from Chinese prostitutes, the Easter Bunny or the Tooth Fairy in our campaign coffers."

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