

March 20, 2008

H 2. SANCTIONS AGAINST REP. WRIGHT. Filed 3/20/08. *TO EXPEL REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS E. WRIGHT FOR UNETHICAL CONDUCT UNFITTING AND UNBECOMING A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.*

As title indicates. Includes several whereas clauses discussing the House's authority to discipline its own members and summarizing the investigation and meetings of the House Select Committee to Investigate Alleged Misconduct and Other Matters Included in Indictments Against Representative Thomas E. Wright. States that the committee unanimously found by clear and convincing evidence that Rep. Wright engaged in unethical and unlawful conduct by committing acts specified in Counts 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, which are summarized as follows.

Count 1: Rep. Wright engaged in conduct unbecoming and unfitting a member of the House of Representatives by orally and in writing improperly and unethically soliciting Torlen L. Wade, Acting Director of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Office of Research, Demonstrations, and Rural Health Development, to write and mail to him a fraudulent letter stating that his office was endorsing The Community's Health Foundation's project to convert a building in Wilmington into Community's Health Foundation offices, New Hanover Community Health Center offices, and a History Museum and committing \$150,000 in funding toward the project's completion. At the time of the solicitation, Wright was an officer of The Community's Health Foundation Inc. and Wright confirmed his earlier oral solicitation by having his legislative assistant type the details needed in the commitment letter in an e-mail that was sent to Wade through his state e-mail account and on a state computer, both of which were authorized for him based on his position as a member of the House of Representatives. At the time of the oral solicitation, the typing and sending of the e-mail, and the typing and sending of the letter, both Wright and Wade knew that the Office of Rural Health would not make such a grant and that Wright would use the letter in seeking to fraudulently obtain funding for The Community's Health Foundation from other sources such as financial institutions and other organizations that make grants and that would believe and rely on the false representations in the letter.

Count 3 and Count 4: Rep. Wright engaged in conduct unbecoming and unfitting a member of the House of Representatives by improperly, fraudulently, and unethically converting money intended to be a charitable contribution to The Community's Health Foundation, Inc. to his own personal use. Wright wrote letters on the Foundation's letterhead to representatives of AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP and Anheuser-Busch Companies Inc. requesting as the Foundation's president a donation to the Foundation, a charitable organization that Rep. Wright represented as qualified to receive tax-deductible donations, that would be used by the Foundation, respectively, for various health related purposes in New Hanover County, and for acquisition and development of a building in Wilmington that would serve as a museum. When AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP sent a check made out to "Communitys Hlth Found Inc" in the amount of \$2,400, Wright deposited that check into his own personal account rather than into the Foundation's account. When Anheuser-Busch Companies Inc. signed and sent a check made out to "Communitys Health Foundation Inc" in the amount of \$5,000, Wright deposited that check into his own personal account rather than into the Foundation's account.

Count 5: Rep. Wright engaged in conduct unbecoming and unfitting a member of the House of Representatives by improperly, fraudulently, and unethically converting money intended to be a charitable contribution to The Community's Health Foundation Inc. to his own personal use. Wright wrote an invoice on the Foundation's letterhead to a representative of AT&T Corp. as a solicitation of a charitable contribution to the Foundation, a charitable organization that Wright represented to be qualified to receive tax-deductible donations. When a representative of AT&T Corp. signed and sent a check made out to "Communitys Health Foundation I" in the amount of \$1,500, Wright deposited that check into his own personal account rather than into the Foundation's account.

Count 7: Rep. Wright improperly, fraudulently, and unethically engaged in a pattern of conduct unbecoming and unfitting a member of the House of Representatives by intentionally failing to disclose approximately \$180,000 in contributions received by his campaign between January 1, 2000, and January 31, 2007. These disclosures are required by law and are intended to safeguard the public trust and to preserve the integrity of the electoral process, the integrity of the House of Representatives, and the integrity of the legislative process.

Count 8: Between on or about October 2001 and on or about August 2004, Rep. Wright engaged in a pattern of conduct unbecoming and unfitting a member of the House of Representatives by improperly, fraudulently, deceptively, and unethically soliciting a false document from a State agency and soliciting corporations for donations to a charitable corporation, The Community's Health Foundation Inc. and by converting to his own personal use money contributed to that charitable organization.

Notes that evidence was presented at the hearing as to Count 2, but no finding was made by the committee and that no evidence was presented at the hearing as to Count 6, so it was not considered by the committee. The committee retained jurisdiction over Counts 2 and 6 for possible further consideration.

States that the House finds that the allegations in Counts 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, are true. Expels Rep. Wright as a member of the House for unethical and unlawful conduct unbecoming and unfitting for a member of the House. Declares the seat for the 18th District of the 2007 House of Representatives vacant.

Intro. by Glazier, Stam.

HOUSE RES