



Morris Heithcock Lodge #41 Fraternal Order of Police

**P.O. Box 57
Franklin, Tennessee 37065**
Proudly Serving Williamson County



November 2, 2007

Press Release

On November 1, 2007, respected Nashville attorney David Raybin issued a press release on behalf of Williamson County Sheriff Ricky Headley regarding a membership issue within the Fraternal Order of Police. The membership and by-laws of the private organization were questioned, as well as the motivation of the organization. The Fraternal Order of Police represents more than 325,000 law enforcement officers across the United States, approximately 10,000 in Tennessee and more than 250 in Williamson County. We have members from every law enforcement agency in Williamson County, and have been the local voice of the rank and file officers for more than 30 years.

Since Sheriff Headley's arrest in January, 2007, the Fraternal Order of Police has remained silent on the issue due to the fact that he is a member of our organization. The members present at the October meeting voted to begin the process of expulsion from the Lodge, and therefore a letter was sent to the Sheriff informing him of the process. There was no press release from the Fraternal Order of Police, nor have we made public statements about the process, in an attempt to avoid the embarrassment to the Sheriff that the issue would cause. We do not attack our membership in public or the media; however, due to Mr. Raybin's press release we have no choice but to respond to his false allegations.

Mr. Raybin is a very knowledgeable and well-respected member of the legal community, and he has represented our members through the Legal Aid Plan on many occasions. Unfortunately he does not appear to understand the inner workings of the Fraternal Order of Police. Our organization is democratic in nature and therefore is not controlled by any one person. To assert that political motivation drives the expulsion proceedings is a case of mistaken fact based on rumors and speculation.

The members of our local lodge, many of whom are afraid to publicly voice their opinion on the Sheriff's legal troubles, have asked to be heard. The law enforcement community, including every Williamson County Sheriff's Deputy, faces unfair ridicule on a daily basis due to the actions of one man. While there have been public shows of support for the Sheriff, including one where members of the Department were "encouraged" to attend, the majority of law enforcement officers cannot support someone who has publicly criticized officers with legal troubles before they had a chance to defend themselves in a court of law. Sheriff Headley said in television interviews that law enforcement officers should be held to a higher standard, and that any punishment meted out to those in the court system should be above the norm due to their profession. He has also been the "Anti Drug Sheriff," making public comments against citizens charged with drug offenses, and yet he minimizes his own drug addiction. Sheriff Headley has publicly admitted that he illegally obtained prescription drugs, and therefore has confessed to committing a crime.

Press Release

Page 2

If any of our other members were in a similar situation, they would have already been either suspended or terminated from their positions. Sheriff Headley has taken that action against his own employees who have been charged with crimes, but because he is a constitutional officer – elected by the people – he is allowed to stay in office until he is convicted of a felony.

Mr. Raybin states that our private organization's decision to disassociate with Sheriff Headley is premature because he has not been convicted of any crime. We have thought long and hard about this decision, and have waited until more information about the Sheriff's criminal activities has surfaced before moving to expel him from the Order. Instead of rushing to judgment after the initial arrest, we began the proceedings after Grand Juries composed of citizens in Williamson and Davidson counties indicted the Sheriff on multiple offenses.

It is our constitutional right to freely associate with whomever we choose, and we are going through the proper procedures within our organization to decide whether he is to remain a member. We regret that the Sheriff will not stand before his fellow members and officers and answer questions regarding this situation, especially when he has made incriminating statements about his own criminal activity in the media. This matter was never intended to be made a public issue, but Sheriff Headley, through his legal counsel, has chosen to politicize it and bring it to the public's eye. We hope that the citizens of Williamson County will see through the attempt to paint Sheriff Headley as a victim because his comrades have seemingly turned against him. The actions within the Fraternal Order of Police and whether or not Sheriff Headley is a member have no bearing on any outcome in the criminal justice system. Our private meetings are not part of the criminal justice process, nor do we intend to make them part of the court of public opinion.

The members of the Fraternal Order of Police, its Executive Board and its President have the same First Amendment rights as every other citizen of the United States. While the President may be the spokesman for the organization, it is the membership that controls the organization.

Adrian Breedlove, President