



ZACH KLEIN

COLUMBUS CITY ATTORNEY

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Contact: Pete Shipley, 614.965.0203
Email: pishipley@columbus.gov

City Attorney Zach Klein Reflects on a Busy Year Where Public Safety and Accountability Remained Top Priorities

Says the City Attorney's Office remained tough on violent crime, cracked down on problem properties and continued to improve public safety in Columbus neighborhoods

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today offered a year-end reflection on the work of the City Attorney's Office to advance its priorities in 2023, headlined by prosecuting thousands of violent and dangerous criminals, cracking down on problem properties in Columbus neighborhoods, and improving public safety across the city by continuing to lead on the issues that matter most to residents.

“My top priority as City Attorney has always been public safety, and over the past year, this office has made great strides to make our neighborhoods and city safer. But we know there's more work to do,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein.

City prosecutors handled over 10,000 criminal prosecutions in 2023, including over 7,000 domestic violence, 2,500 drunk driving, and hundreds of other criminal cases where prosecutors asked for tough sentences to hold offenders accountable. In May, City Attorney Klein began pushing for [\\$500,000 bonds for dangerous domestic abusers](#) who pose the greatest threat to victims and their families. City Attorney Klein also stood alongside the Division of Police to [ramp up enforcement and prosecution of street racing](#) and reckless driving offenses, took a hard line against hate and bias crimes, and filed a number of ethnic intimidation charges, most notably in response to [anti-Israel vandalism and threats](#) at the Ohio State's Jewish student center.

While prosecutors pursued extensive criminal dockets throughout the year, City Attorney Klein also noted [the expansion of the City's first-of-its-kind diversion program](#) focused on rehabilitation over prosecution for certain low-level, nonviolent theft offenses. This year saw 63 offenders successfully complete a Buckeye Diversion Program, and dozens of others enrolled in these programs to connect them with resources to address their needs and decrease recidivism.

“I'll always fight to get violent, dangerous criminals who have no regard for the law or human life off the streets and behind bars,” said City Attorney Klein. **“But at the same time, we're committed to getting help to people who truly need it, and ultimately turn their lives around to be the citizens and moms and dads they want to be. It's an innovative approach that does the most good for our community.”**

In 2023, the City Attorney's Office worked alongside CPD and Code Enforcement to shut down 17 problem properties and file lawsuits against a number of [dangerous bars](#), [after hours clubs](#), [drug houses](#) and other businesses known for violent crime, like the [Wilson Road Greyhound Bus Terminal](#) and [Jack's Corner Pub](#).

This year, the City Attorney's Office also kept a close eye on nuisance apartment complexes, including [securing a multi-million dollar contempt fine](#) against the owners of Latitude Five25, following them to [bankruptcy court in New Jersey](#) when they tried to dodge fines and winning a court battle to appoint a receiver to [take over the property](#).

At the Southpark Apartments, City Attorney Klein announced [a signed agreement to improve safety, bolster security and maintain sanitary living conditions](#), and at Colonial Village, the City took swift legal action to hold the lender, receiver and former property manager [in contempt of court](#) after property inspections uncovered hundreds of residents and families living in substandard units that were under court order to be boarded up and vacant. Additionally, the City continued to support the Owner Occupied Initiative, a program created under City Attorney Klein that connects lower income, largely elderly residents with resources to fix code violations to keep these owners in their homes.

“This year, we’ve shut down drug houses, held bad landlords accountable, and fought to clean up problem bars and businesses because families and neighbors deserve better,” City Attorney Klein added. **“We’re showing that if you own or operate a dangerous or noncompliant property, the City will hold you accountable.”**

City Attorney Klein also continued to use the power of the City Attorney's Office in 2023 to promote public safety and the voices of Columbus residents at the state and national level, including ongoing court battles to [fix the state's broken criminal background check system](#) and [implement commonsense gun safety measures](#) like safe storage requirements for households with children.

Additionally, the Solicitor General's section filed proactive [litigation to hold Kia and Hyundai accountable](#) for skyrocketing vehicle thefts in Columbus and to hold multi-national chemical corporations liable for their negligence in the production of [dangerous forever chemicals](#). The office also signed onto amicus briefs [defending women's access to reproductive care](#), [opposing a ballot measure](#) to steal power away from Ohio voters, and [defending federal prohibitions on violent domestic abusers from possessing firearms](#).

The City Attorney's Office this year also played a pivotal role in the [expansion of services for domestic violence survivors](#) under the city and county's coordinated Blueprint for Safety framework and [worked closely with City Council to grow Project Taillight](#) to provide no-cost car repairs for low-income residents.

“As City Attorney, I want Columbus to have a voice on the national stage and continue to lead on quality of life issues that matter most right here at home,” City Attorney Klein said. **“We will continue to fight for our residents and the ability of our city to make real change to benefit the lives of all who call Columbus home. While we’ve made real progress to advance our priorities and make Columbus a world class city, we need to work together to build on that momentum in 2024. We’re not done yet.”**