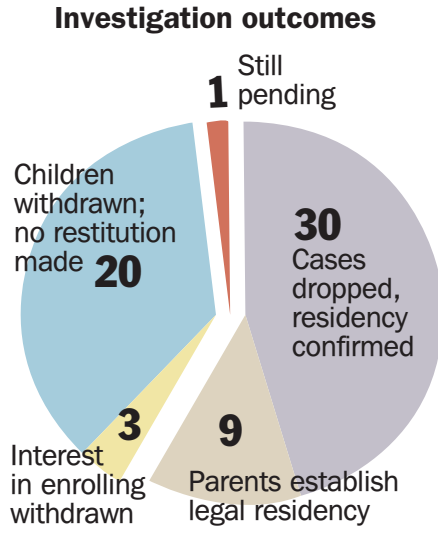


Jail a rarity in disputes over tuition

Williams-Bolar case is one of only two since 2005 to end in court after residency challenge



How unusual is the Kelley Williams-Bolar case?

Since 2005, Copley-Fairlawn school officials have investigated the residency claims of 64 parents. But only one, Kelley Williams-Bolar, was found guilty of a crime. At left are the outcomes of the other 63 cases.

Source: Copley-Fairlawn Schools

Firestone to end racing deal, close Akron tire plant.

BUSINESS, D1

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

RIVAL ZIPS FALL 79-68 TO FLASHES

HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING

Defending champion Wadsworth puts four in state final matches
SPORTS, C1



Relish, a monthly food magazine, makes its debut inside today with the "Breakfast Issue."



PHIL MASTURZO/Akron Beacon Journal

Since 2005, Copley-Fairlawn has looked into 64 instances of possible school-residency violations. Kelley Williams-Bolar is the only parent to get jail time.

By John Higgins
Beacon Journal staff writer

Almost half of the 64 families that Copley-Fairlawn suspected of violating the district's residency requirements since 2005 were allowed to stay.

School officials either confirmed their addresses in the course of an investigation or decided they couldn't prove otherwise and dropped the inquiry.

Kelley Williams-Bolar is the only parent out of those cases who is now a convicted felon, which made her story an international media phenomenon.

Beacon First

A Beacon Journal analysis of all 64 cases of disputed residency that Copley-Fairlawn schools investigated since 2005 shows just how unusual the Williams-Bolar case is.

Nine families were allowed to remain because they established legal residency and settled on a repayment plan for back tuition.

Twenty other families also got caught, but they withdrew their children from the district. None of them paid back tuition and not one was convicted of a crime.

Residency under scrutiny

Copley-Fairlawn, which is almost entirely supported by local property tax dollars rather than state aid, does not allow nonresidents to enroll unless they pay a tuition rate that is set by the state.

The district has aggressively investigated situations where it was believed that a family was not living where it claimed to live, even offering \$100 rewards to tipsters whose information panned out.

Two students seeking the reward claimed in Please see **Jail**, A4



The case of an Akron woman who falsified records to get her daughters into Copley schools has stirred debate far and wide, including on YouTube, where a Taiwanese video about the case can be viewed.



so她把波勒一案從嚴處理 wanted to make an example of Kelley Williams

Misconceptions persist following mom's conviction

By John Higgins
Beacon Journal staff writer

The Kelley Williams-Bolar saga has spawned numerous distorted, misleading or wrong assumptions about Williams-Bolar and the Copley-Fairlawn and Akron school districts.

The spectacle even reached Taiwan, where a computer animation posted on YouTube - in Chinese with English subtitles - portrayed prosecutors as racist buffoons wearing cowboy hats.

- Three false assumptions about the case have persisted in the media frenzy:
- That she was trying to send her kids to a better school.
- That she was cheating the National School Lunch Program.
- That Copley-Fairlawn discriminated against her because she is black.

Quality not an issue

Williams-Bolar has consistently said she was concerned about the safety of her neighborhood, not the quality of the Akron Public Schools.

Furthermore, there is nothing in the 70 pages of her testimony in the trial transcript that indicates she enrolled

Please see **Mom**, A4

Kasich plans low-key signing of union bill

When legislators approve measure, Ohio governor says he won't make 'big deal' of it

By Ann Sanner
Associated Press

COLUMBUS: Gov. John Kasich said Friday that he anticipates the legislature will pass a tough bill restricting union activity by public workers in Ohio and that he'll sign it into law with little fanfare, out of respect for the raw emotions surrounding the bill.

The measure - which still has to

go through the Republican-led House - would limit the bargaining rights of roughly 350,000 teachers, firefighters, police officers and other public employees. They wouldn't be able to negotiate health-care benefits or certain other working conditions.

Unlike with similar legislation being debated in Wisconsin, Republicans in Ohio managed to move the

bill quickly through the state Senate. The bill was narrowly approved Wednesday on a 17-16 vote.

"Glad it passed," Kasich said, adding that he wasn't surprised.

Wisconsin's measure remains in limbo in the GOP-controlled legislature after the 14 Senate Democrats fled to Illinois two weeks ago to deprive the chamber of a quorum. In Ohio, Republicans hold big enough majorities in both chambers to vote

bill quickly through the state Senate. The bill was narrowly approved Wednesday on a 17-16 vote.

"The day we sign it, it's not going to be some - you know, I don't anticipate some big deal because this is hard for people," Kasich said at a separate bill-signing event. "And anything that's hard, I want to be respectful of other people's feelings, their thoughts and their emotions."

Wisconsin's measure remains in limbo in the GOP-controlled legislature after the 14 Senate Democrats fled to Illinois two weeks ago to deprive the chamber of a quorum. In Ohio, Republicans hold big enough majorities in both chambers to vote

Please see **Union**, A8

Ohio gains more jobs in revision

Final numbers surprise agency, show state added 31,000 in 2010; service sector sees most growth

By Jim Mackinnon
Beacon Journal business writer

Ohio ended 2010 with more jobs than it started the year.

That's the bottom line included with Friday's report on January employment figures.

Ohio added about 31,000 jobs for all of 2010, according to final revised figures from the state Department of Job and Family Services.

Figures adjusted to take into account seasonal factors show Ohio had 5,034,200 people working in December 2010 compared to 5,003,200 in December 2009. Looked at a slightly different way, non-seasonally adjusted figures showed a gain of 27,100 last year - 5,077,700 in December 2010 compared to 5,050,600 a year earlier.

Ohio's annual job gains came even as the final change to the 2010 national figure showed a drop of 452,000 from previous totals. While there were downward revisions from the earlier, preliminary national figures, the U.S. still ended 2010 with more people working in December - 130,260,000 - than in December 2009, when the figure was 129,320,000.

Ohio's job gain for the year pleasantly

Please see **Jobs**, A6

Analysts say despite joblessness dropping, some liberals, conservatives are still feeling downbeat. A6
Unemployment rate falls to 8.9%, the lowest in almost two years. About 192,000 jobs added. D1



Today's weather
52° High 31° Low
Forecast, Page B8

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Jail

Many scofflaws leave district owing tuition

Continued from Page A1

late 2007 that another student really lived in Akron. The district reviewed public records and hired a private investigator to prove the parent was not living in the district.

At the hearing, however, the mother told officials that she and the father were separated and that she was living at a legitimate address in the district.

"A surveillance of the . . . property revealed she was living there," according to the district's investigation report.

School officials cleared other parents when they brought proper documentation or provided additional information.

Sometimes the district turned away would-be students before they enrolled. In one case, a parent withdrew when the district asked for a utility bill to prove residency. In another, the applicant was the student, an 18-year old who was advised he should get a GED instead.

At least twice, the district dropped an investigation when the family under surveillance changed their habits.

The district believes in one case an Akron city official, who confronted a private investigator snooping around his neighbor's house, told the family what he was up to. In another case, officials believe a district employee tipped off the family in question.

Twenty of the families the district confronted withdrew their children without paying back tuition.

In many of those cases, parents listed addresses that didn't hold up under scrutiny.

One boy described his property to an elementary school teacher as having a pond and deer on it. A private investigator didn't find a pond at the address on file - only a vacant house for sale.

The boy was allowed to stay only after officials verified in May 2007 that the mother had moved in with relatives in the district for the last few weeks of school.

Also that year, the district caught two families using the same Copley residence to enroll their children.

The investigation report noted, "a total of seven people were attempting to register using a house of 800 square feet."

Agreements to settle up

In nine cases, the district caught the parents, but allowed the children to stay if the families established legal residency and sign a settlement agreement spelling out how much back tuition they would pay.

But even those who sign settlement agreements haven't always keep their promises.

One family, who had moved into an apartment to establish legal residency, still owed \$2,438.27 at the end of May 2008.

The parent wrote a check for the outstanding balance in time for graduation.

Boehner plans defense of gay marriage ban

House panel could put issue before the courts

Associated Press
WASHINGTON: House Speaker John Boehner said Friday that Congress may go to court to defend the federal law against gay marriage, which President Barack Obama's administration has concluded is unconstitutional.

Boehner, R-West Chester, said he would convene a group of congressional leaders that has the authority to instruct the House counsel to represent the chamber in court. The panel would include Boehner, Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va.; Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.; Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi D-Calif., and Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, D-Md.

"The constitutionality of this law should be determined by the courts - not by the president unilaterally," Boehner said in a statement. "This action by the House will ensure the matter is addressed in a manner consistent with our Constitution."

The Obama administration last month announced it would no longer defend the constitutionality of the federal law that bans recognition of gay mar-



Kelley Williams-Bolar is portrayed in a screen grab from a YouTube video that depicts the school-residency case as racist.

Mom

Role of school quality, race has been distorted since case

Continued from Page A1

her daughters in Copley to get a better education.

That hasn't stopped numerous national commentators, from both liberal and conservative publications, from assuming that was her motive.

Conservative commentator Kyle Olson told National Public Radio that "a lot of people are seeing this as the Rosa Parks moment for education and education reform."

In a column on the conservative Web site Townhall.com, Olson reiterated his claim that Williams-Bolar was seeking escape from inferior schools.

He declared the Williams-Bolar case would put a human face on the school-choice movement and serve as "a wake-up call for Americans about the need for bold, substantial school choice laws throughout the country."

The Washington Post published an opinion piece online by Kevin Huffman headlined, "A Rosa Parks moment for education" that cited Olson's NPR comment.

"Williams-Bolar's offense?" Huffman wrote. "Lying about her address so her two daughters, zoned to the lousy Akron city schools, could attend better schools in

the neighboring Copley-Fairlawn district."

Columnist Patricia J. Williams, writing for the liberal Nation Magazine, also got it wrong:

"In Akron, Ohio, an African-American tiger mother named Kelley Williams-Bolar was recently prosecuted for lying about where she lived so she could get her children into a decent school district."

Eligibility for aid affirmed

The second false assumption - that she cheated the school lunch program - is more subtle, turning up in online comments about the story around the Internet.

Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh refers to the lunch applications on her website, explaining why Williams-Bolar was charged with records tampering:

"Ms. Williams-Bolar failed to disclose her job and income from the Akron Public Schools one year, and the second year, failed to disclose both her income and child support. The investigation showed that she received around \$800 a month in child support."

In fact, Williams-Bolar wasn't required to include any income information on the application for subsidized lunches, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the program.

Because she already had established her income eligibility for food stamps - a benefit she reported on subsidized housing records - her daughters automatically qualified for free lunches, according to the USDA.

Copley officials confirmed Wil-

liams-Bolar qualified for the program.

"The income information isn't relevant," said district Treasurer John Wheadon.

Wheadon was questioned about the forms - which included the Copley address of her father - by a prosecutor and William-Bolar's attorney.

But jurors never heard that food-stamp recipients are instructed to skip the income section on the form because they automatically qualify for free lunch.

They didn't have to hear that information, said Walsh's spokesperson, Laurie Cramer, because Williams-Bolar wasn't charged with defrauding the school lunch program.

"The jury found her guilty of making false statements in the free lunch applications," Cramer said. "The jury is not required to specify the exact falsifications, but the jury was directed to look at the documents in their entirety."

The third false assumption of the case - that the district discriminated based on race - was started when Williams-Bolar herself reported the district to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights in 2008.

Federal investigators from the Cleveland office "found no evidence that similarly situated families were treated differently based on race with respect to the District's enforcement of its residency," according to the U.S. Department of Education.

John Higgins can be reached at 330-996-3792 or jhiggins@thebeaconjournal.com. Read the education blog at http://education.ohio.com/.

The student had a diploma in hand when the check bounced on the closed bank account.

"We are still pursuing collections of the partial amount of \$538 that is still owed," said Copley Fairlawn treasurer John Wheadon. "I've spoken with the family and they agreed to pay the amount. The prosecutor would know nothing about it."

Copley-Fairlawn officials say Williams-Bolar owes \$30,556.78 for back tuition, but that's not the biggest unpaid bill.

A Barberton family owes

\$32,649.20 for sending six children, including one with disabilities, to Copley-Fairlawn schools.

That was the only case other than Williams-Bolar's to wind up in court.

"We went to the prosecutor's office because we believed that there was a theft of services," said the school district's attorney, John Britton.

Unlike Williams-Bolar, the Barberton parent wasn't convicted of a crime.

Summit County Common Pleas Judge Elinore Marsh Stormer, after hearing evidence in a nonjury trial, found the defendant not guilty. She ruled that improperly enrolling children in another school district didn't meet the legal requirements of Ohio's grand theft statute - the only charge brought against the mother.

"In the opinion, I stated that what she had done was wrong, but it wasn't illegal as the statute

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