

COURTROOM BULLDOG



Photos by Patrick Reddy/The Enquirer

Lawyer Eric Deters searches for a document last month in his home office before returning to his law office in Independence. Deters isn't afraid to take on strange cases, which attract publicity.

Some dislike tactics, but Eric Deters fights hard

By Chuck Martin
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In case there's any doubt, Eric Deters loves publicity. Christmas came early for the controversial Northern Kentucky lawyer when, on Dec. 11, the Kenton County Fiscal Court moved a proposed site for a new jail from near Independence to south Covington. For one year, Deters led an acrimonious bout against the Independence jail site — at no charge.

He filed lawsuits, organized and rallied hundreds of irate homeowners and sparred with the Fiscal Court. He also made sure that the media showed up to cover the melee.

Deters, 44, takes credit for winning the jail fight, a classic David-vs.-Goliath battle that even he first believed was unwinnable.

"It would be false modesty for me to say this was not a huge victory for me," he says in a gravelly voice, tie loosened, sitting in his chaotic office in Independence.

"It changed a lot of people's perceptions of me. ... They saw me standing up for them and fighting for them."

Funny. Of all the theories on what motivates Deters — the headlines, his ego, the money — probably few would have guessed the thick-skinned lawyer wants to be liked.

Most might only perceive Deters as the arrogant lawyer who takes on crazy cases, a guy who "shoots from the hip without having the facts," as Kenton County Judge-executive Ralph Drees describes his foe in the jail fight.



Eric Deters, outside the Kenton County Courthouse in Independence, led residents in a fight to keep a jail from being built near Independence. The middle child of 11 brothers and sisters, Deters learned the powers of persuasion early.

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