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## Cordray will avoid hospitals' dispute

*Cliff Peale*

Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray says he's unlikely to intervene in the dispute on the future of University Hospital and the merger of Mercy Health Partners with Jewish Hospital.

While Cordray's office has started a 60-day review of Mercy's \$180 million purchase of Jewish Hospital, which the hospitals hope to close by early January, he said he won't let multiple requests to delay that merger complicate a "by-the-book review."

"We're not going to let our office be manipulated to serve the agenda of people here who need to sit down and consult with each other in a more mature way," Cordray said.

The University of Cincinnati and city leaders have called for a delay until the future of University Hospital can be secured. The Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, which includes University, Jewish and Fort Hamilton hospitals, the Drake Center and West Chester Medical Center, probably will dissolve after Jewish leaves to merge with the five-hospital Mercy system.

UC leaders say that without the support of a hospital group, University Hospital will be unable to invest in its physical facilities or serve the as the safety net hospital for people in the urban core who cannot afford to pay for medical care.

The Corryville hospital also operates the region's only top-level trauma center and loses millions on services such as the Air Care helicopters.

Cordray, who spoke Thursday to Enquirer editors and reporters, addressed other issues, including:

**Foreclosures:** Cordray's office has filed two lawsuits against out-of-state mortgage servicers with loans in Ohio, alleging that their actions - poor customer service, failure to make loan modifications and engaging in deceptive modification agreements - violate consumer protection laws.

If judges could get mortgage servicers and homeowners to sit down together, Cordray said 40 percent to 60 percent of mortgage loans might be modified to let people keep their homes - at least in the short term. But he said getting mortgage servicers to come to the table has been the biggest challenge.

**Casinos:** Voters' approval of casino gambling this month "roils up the landscape" regarding games of chance. While there's still a controversy about how the amendment will impact bingo

and other charitable gambling regulated by Ohio Attorney General, Cordray said some outfits are already trying to see what they can get away with, he said. The Ohio Racing Commission, for example, in investigating Beulah Park in Columbus for installing "sweepstakes machines" at the racetrack. The casino issue will also result in about \$12 million to \$14 million a year in new taxes directed toward law enforcement training.

**Public records:** Cordray said he advised the Ohio Department of Education to release data on the names, home addresses, phone numbers and e-mails of all licensed teachers in the state's database to the chairman of the Ohio Republican Party, which requested the information under the Ohio Public Records Act.

"They're licensed professionals and therefore, under the law, it's a public record," said Cordray, a Democrat. He's now defending the state against a lawsuit by the Ohio Education Association, a teacher's union, seeking to block release of the records.