

PRESS RELEASE

Contacts: Warner Mendenhall 330-328-1026  
Patti Longville 330-634-8100

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CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM GROUP APPLAUDS CITY OF AKRON  
FOR DITCHING UNCONSTITUTIONAL LAW

The Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee, which for many years has been at odds with the City of Akron over issues related to political campaign financing, applauds the Akron City Council and Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic for recently scrapping a city ordinance mandating the submission to the city of paid political ads before they are run.

The original provision, "Election Period Communications Disclosure Statements" was enacted in 2003 at the same time council put into effect the campaign finance reform law passed by voters via citizen initiative in 1998. City Council voted on December 19 to overturn the ordinance. AFSC just learned of Council action this week.

The ordinance, which AFSC and other campaign reformers in Akron opposed, required political candidates and groups sponsoring political candidates, to submit to the city copies of what was to be mailed, printed, or aired prior to their public release. Many felt this was an unconstitutional violation of free speech. AFSC and others had discussed filing suit against the law.

On December 14, 2005, AFSC faxed an open records request to the city requesting copies of all paid ads that had been submitted to the city by political candidates in 2005. Five days later, Akron City Council voted to overturn the law.

"We are pleased the City Council and the Mayor agreed to ditch this unconstitutional law." said Warner Mendenhall, member of AFSC's Campaign Finance Reform Subcommittee. "Political candidates should not have to show the city what political ads they plan to run beforehand. This stifles free speech and unconstitutionally burdens the ability of candidates to communicate with the public."

"The timing of Council's action may have been more than a coincidence with our request for copies of all political ads from the city," said Patti Longville, member of AFSC's Campaign Finance Reform Subcommittee, "Regardless, the city did the right thing. It's a victory for the citizens of Akron and for all political candidates who felt their ability to communicate to voters was restricted by this law."