

## ***Granny D' thrown out of Akron mayor's office***

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Akron - Doris "Granny D" Haddock, a 91-year-old grandmother who favors elaborate hats, walked 3,200 miles from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., to lobby for campaign finance reform.

But when Haddock dropped by Akron City Hall yesterday, a city official reacted angrily, summoning police officers to evict Granny D and about 70 others. About 15 police escorted the crowd, mostly senior citizens, as they sang "America the Beautiful."

They were at City Hall in favor of Issue 7, a campaign finance reform proposal on the November ballot.

At the time, Mayor Don Plusquellic was attending a scheduled meeting of Akron Tomorrow, a business roundtable, said Laraine Duncan, the mayor's spokeswoman.

Jeff Wilhite, Plusquellic's chief of staff, angrily ordered the demonstrators out of the mayor's office.

The mayor, known for his prowess at soliciting campaign contributions, and City Council have been working to defeat Issue 7 by coupling it with Issue 6, a \$2.9 million property tax. Plusquellic contends that the city would need Issue 6 money to pay for the publicly financed campaigns.

"That was interesting," Haddock said sarcastically after being escorted from City Hall.

"The people have been begging to talk to the mayor, and what do they get? Kicked out of the office."

Issue 7 would offer public financing of election campaigns to candidates who voluntarily pledge not to solicit or accept contributions. In return, a candidate can be reimbursed for a set amount of legal campaign expenses - up to \$5,000 for ward council seats, \$25,000 for at-large council and \$50,000 for mayor.

If the issue is approved, Akron would become the first municipality in the United States to enact full public financing of candidates, said Nick Nyhart of Public Campaign, a national organization in Washington that promotes public financing.

Entrenched incumbents such as Plusquellic - who last faced a serious challenger in 1989 - fiercely oppose public-financing initiatives and fear increased competition, Nyhart said.

Part of what has motivated proponents in Akron has been Summit County's corruption scandals of recent years, said Greg Coleridge of the Akron Clean Money Campaign.

The most recent case involved Raymond Kapper, a fixture of Akron government who served as City Council president and service director. In August, Kapper pleaded guilty to receiving \$484,000 in contracts while serving on two county boards.

Coleridge called the \$2.9 million property tax a "poison pill" intended to kill interest in public financing.

For the 2001 election cycle for at-large and ward council seats, public financing for all 28 candidates in contested party primary races would have cost \$190,000.

"The money is a bogus issue," said Nyhart.

Plusquellic's 1 mill property tax in Issue 6 contradicts the language in Issue 7, the voter initiative. He denied that tax was a "poison pill."

"It sounds like a lot of money, but \$50,000?" Plusquellic said weeks ago. "It's a joke."

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