

## **American Friends Service Committee**

Northeast Ohio Office

2101 Front St., #111, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44221

Phone: 330-928-2301 Fax: 330-928-2628 Web: [www.afsc.net](http://www.afsc.net)

---

## **8 REASONS TO HATE 8**

*Second in a series*

<http://www.afsc.net/ctsosaw.html>

### **It's not a plan but a blank check**

Issue 8 is not a plan. How can it be? It totals only two and one-half pages in length. That's two and one-half pages to define the provisions for both the Mayor's scholarship plan and leasing the city sewer system — each of which is a complex issue.

Issue 8 is not a plan. It's an outline, a sketch, a beginning rough draft.

The sewer system portion of this sketch is one single solitary page. It reads as if it was put together in an afternoon. It contains only a few provisions – some are specific while others are incredibly vague and undefined.

Issue 8 is not a lease agreement. It's not an operating agreement. It's not a contract. The paperwork connected to renting an end table for 99 days from Rent-a-Center contains more specifics and conditions than this proposal to lease Akron's sewer system for up to 99 years.

The watchdog non-profit group Food and Water Watch says that contracts in other communities to farm out water and sewer systems to business corporations often runs into the hundreds of pages. Citizens in other communities knew at least somewhat what they were getting into. Not so with citizens and voters in Akron concerning Issue 8.

Issue 8 supporters want voters to support what amounts to a blank check. "Trust us," they say. They'll fill in the many blanks afterwards. They'll do what's good for voters. They'll determine exactly how much you'll pay, when, and for what services. This paternalistic attitude is disempowering to citizens and voters.

For example (and there are many), voters have virtually no idea how an outside corporation will be specifically controlled under Issue 8. What if the corporation awarded the lease doesn't comply with whatever provisions are ultimately approved? Issue 8 lacks even general terms for compliance and sanctions for noncompliance. Issue 8 supporters in the Mayor's office want voters to turn over their power and authority to them.

Ever hear the term, "the devil is in the details?" Issue 8 has virtually no fine print. The absence of so many basic provisions is deeply troubling.

If any community group or city councilperson presented an equivalent sketch or outline and tried to sell it to voters as a credible plan around two complex issues equivalent to funding education and leasing a public utility, would it be taken seriously? Absolutely not.

Issue 8 supporters have responded to concerns of vagueness with promises. That's all they are, however, promises. Voters are being asked to vote for what's on the ballot, not promises.

With no definitions and few specifics about the terms and provisions of a sewer agreement, Issue 8 provides substantial power and authority to the Service Director, who will negotiate the actual lease contract.

Citizens don't need to know every detail about what a corporation will do under a lease agreement, such as how frequently the grass will be cut in front of the sewer department. But citizens do have a right to know more than a few elementary provisions, some of which have enormous loopholes – which will be examined in upcoming pieces.

Writing blank checks is not considered fiscally wise. For Akron ratepayers and citizens, giving a blank check to the Mayor's office under Issue 8 is profoundly unwise.

Greg Coleridge  
Director  
Economic Justice & Empowerment Program