

AIR TIME

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Applied Information Resources is a non-profit, public policy research and community information organization dedicated to:

- Citizen education on public issues.
- Assisting human service organizations in evaluating their programs, and
- Providing the best possible information to decision makers responding to changing human and urban needs.

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Critical Ballot Issues Seem Headed For This November's Ballot

Several critical ballot issues are likely to confront Ohio voters this November 8th. Reform Ohio Now, a coalition of statewide reform groups, currently seeks signatures to place three state constitutional amendments on the ballot. At the same time, Citizens for Tax Reform collects signatures for another state constitutional amendment that would legally restrict the annual increase of state and local taxes.

The three proposed amendments sponsored by Reform Ohio Now focus on election reform and campaign finance reform. One proposal would establish an independent, non-partisan redistricting commission charged with redrawing Ohio Congressional and state districts every ten years.

A second initiative would create a non-partisan board of election supervisors to supervise the administration of elections in Ohio. This proposed amendment would also set up procedures to make it easy for Ohio voters

to vote early during the thirty-five days prior to an election day. The final Reform Ohio Now proposal includes a series of contribution limits to the political campaigns of candidates for statewide office and candidates for the General Assembly. Common Cause, the national citizens' organization that advocates for government reform, and its state affiliate, CommonCause/Ohio, have joined the Reform Ohio Now coalition to promote these amendments to the state's

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Constitution.

The implications of the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) proposed amendment are far from positive. This initiative, if passed, would restrict the annual rate of growth of state, county, and local government by limiting it to the rate of inflation plus population change from

the previous year or to 3.5% (whichever allowable rate is greater). The only way to exceed the amendment's restriction on state or local tax increases is by a ballot initiative approved by the voters.

Colorado provides the only example of a state with a similar TABOR-amendment in place. Results there have been so negative in terms of crippling state and local service delivery that an initiative is on the Colorado ballot in November to set aside the tax restrictions for the next five years.

In Ohio, Secretary of State Ken Blackwell champions the TABOR-proposal, while members of the General Assembly representing both political parties are against it. By the end of August, Ohioans should know whether they will be voting on any or all of these state constitutional amendments

AIR HONORS SUPPORTERS AT ANNUAL DINNER

At its annual dinner on May 11, AIR honored Mary Burke, John J. Gilligan and Marian Spencer. The following article presents the speech given when honoring each of them.

Mary Burke

We present you with this Friend of AIR Award for your long-time commitment to working with the poor and the homeless and for your efforts to implement the goal



P. Burke, Mary Burke

that every American deserves a decent, safe, affordable place to live. You have carried out this commitment as both an advocate and as a successful developer of high quality, affordable housing. Although you are still a young woman, you have come a long way from your childhood in Sycamore Township to your leadership role in OTR. After graduating from the University of Cincinnati with a B.A. in Social Work, you took a position at the Hamilton County Department of Human Services. As a caseworker assisting women with children, you discovered that decent affordable housing was almost impossible to find for your clients. This reality led you to take a job with the Over-the-Rhine Housing Network, a non-profit housing corporation located in that neighborhood. In a short time you mastered the intricacies of successfully funding and constructing housing projects, and under your leadership as Director the corporation has developed 300 units including 100 units that you manage.

Beyond providing housing, you also seek to make community residents as partners in your various projects. A recent independent evaluation of non-profit housing corporations called OTRHN

“one of the leaders among NDCs in Cincinnati.” Meanwhile in your role as a housing advocate, you have co-chaired Cincinnatians for Affordable Housing and you serve as a board member of the Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in Ohio. These accomplishments reveal that beneath your humble, friendly exterior resides a passion for helping others and for creating a more just and equitable society.

Your first involvement with AIR occurred when we interviewed you during the research process for our second study of homelessness in Cincinnati. Since that time, we have joined forces with you in helping to educate citizens about housing needs and the problems confronting low-income families. You have been a speaker at Thursday Community Issues Forums, and we also prevailed on you to get involved with and then become a board member of Citizens for Citizen Renewal, the regional citizens’ organization that Air helped launch. Recently, we teamed-up with you and others to form Affordable Housing Advocates, a new coalition to promote affordable housing in this area. Cincinnati is very fortunate to have someone with your talents and heart working to provide decent housing for the ill-housed and the homeless, and we consider ourselves very fortunate to be able to call you a good friend of AIR.

Marian Spencer

We present you with this Friend of AIR Award for your life of service to this city and for your support of Applied Information Resources over the years. Few initiatives to better the lives of citizens can be cited that do not include the name of you or your husband Donald. You both

comprise a veritable who’s who of good causes. Your involvement in Civil Rights led you to become a board member of the Cincinnati



M. Spencer, M.Burke, J. Gilligan, A. Schneider

nati chapter of the NAACP, and that organization honored you by naming you as its first woman president. Following in the footsteps of Theodore M. Berry, you embraced the cause of good government as a Charter board member. In 1983, you accepted Charter’s request that you become a candidate for City Council, and that November you were elected to that body. As a member of Council, you served as the City’s Vice Mayor, and you championed neighborhood concerns. In recent years, your commitment continues unabated to causes that range from supporting a return to proportional representation to your current role as a plaintiff in a case to protect citizen-voting rights. Your connections to Applied Information Resources go back to AIR’s beginnings in the 1980s. As Vice Mayor, you commissioned AIR to research and edit a resource manual for Cincinnati’s Community Councils, an action that earned you an attack by a Republican on City Council. Ever after, AIR has worked closely with you on variety of initiatives. We could always count on you as a speaker or an attendee at Thursday Community Issues Forums. More recently in 2001 and 2002, you joined us in our fight to first win the campaign finance reform Charter Amendment and then to defend the public finance portion of it. Your energy and passion

RACE RELATIONS STUDY MOVES FORWARD

AIR moves ahead with its study on race relations in Cincinnati. Funded by the Stephen H. Wilder Foundation, the study is designed to measure the attitudes of white and African-American Cincinnatians con-

cerning issues of race. AIR currently analyzes the findings from a random telephone survey of 537 white and black city residents that was conducted by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati.

Although not ready to report the specific findings of the telephone survey, AIR can acknowledge that the survey responses reveal major differences in the views of African-American and white interviewees. The ten

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CONTRIBUTIONS HELP AIR, INC. WITH COMMUNITY WORK

AIR depends on individual contributions to support our work. Your contributions help fund the support services, such as equipment, technological services, and staff which are needed to conduct this work. We invite you to assist us as AIR takes on new community issues and challenges.

\$25

\$50

\$100

\$500

Make your tax-deductible checks payable to: **AIR, Inc.** and send to

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for issues is infectious, and you never seem to get discouraged by the daunting problems that face us. Your spirit is a model for all citizen-activists, and it is why we need to keep you as a close and very dear friend of AIR.

John J. Gilligan

We present you with this Friend of AIR Award for your lifetime of service as a public official, and for your achievements after returning to Cincinnati in the 1990s that often involved Applied Information Resources. During your career in government, you served as a City Council member, a Congressman, the Governor of Ohio, and the Administrator for International Development during the Carter Administration. Certainly we cannot leave out that you are currently in the midst of your second term on the Cincinnati School Board.

We do not honor you, however, for the number of offices won, but for your use of those offices for improving the lives of average people. Your four years as Governor provide an example of your uncompromising leadership style of working for the common good. During the 1970 cam-

paign, you told voters that Ohio's underfunded public schools were a disgrace, and that state government was also short changing many critical human services. Once elected, you did not flinch from the hard job of solving those problems, and you convinced the General Assembly and then the voters that Ohio needed an income tax in order to make state government viable. You next turned your talents to transforming foreign aid under the Carter Administration into a program that actually assisted struggling people in Third World countries who confront basic health and economic survival issues. All this adds up to a career



Bill Woods and John Gilligan

that serves as a model for going into public life with the goal of creating a more just and compassionate society.

When you returned to Cincinnati in 1992, you immediately involved yourself

in the life of this city. As director of the Civic Forum at the U.C. College of Law, you began to convene community leaders around critical issues such as race relations. In fact, you contacted AIR during your Forums on urban poverty because we were just completing a report on affordable housing needs in Greater Cincinnati.

We then tapped you as a frequent speaker at Thursday forums at Christ Church Cathedral. In 1995, you asked AIR to help facilitate the Civic Forum, and we worked with you to plan and conduct this fall series for six years. Moreover, the 1995 Civic Forum series on regionalism helped launch Citizens for Civic Renewal, and you became the first co-chair of this regional citizens' organization while AIR served as its initial staff.

Later Forums on public education helped convince you to make the revitalization of Cincinnati's Public Schools as your top priority. Although we have seen less of you since your immersion in the challenges of the School Board, we know just where to go when we need intellectual sustenance, a cry of outrage about a new public injustice, or a pep talk about how to go about resolving a tough community issue. You will always be our favorite Governor and a true friend of AIR.

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Public Policy and Research

RACE RELATIONS STUDY MOVES FORWARD

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survey questions ranged from inquiries designed to gauge general perceptions about race relations to specific probes to discover personal examples of prejudice. Several questions also focused on local issues such as police/community relations.



***AIR moves ahead with
its study on race
relations in Cincinnati.***

While it completes its analysis of survey data, AIR prepares to conduct focus groups and interviews with community leaders in order to provide mean-

ing and depth to the random survey. The four focus groups will be comprised of African-American and white residents who also represent different neighborhoods, backgrounds, and ages, and the interviews will include leaders from the business, religious, government, neighborhood, and civic sectors.

Once the results from the survey, focus groups, and interviews are compiled in a report, AIR will launch an outreach effort to insure this information gets in the hands of organizations and decision makers who are working to improve race relations in Cincinnati. Meanwhile, a grant this summer from the **Greater Cincinnati Foundation** provides the funding to pay for the four focus groups.