

AIR TIME

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

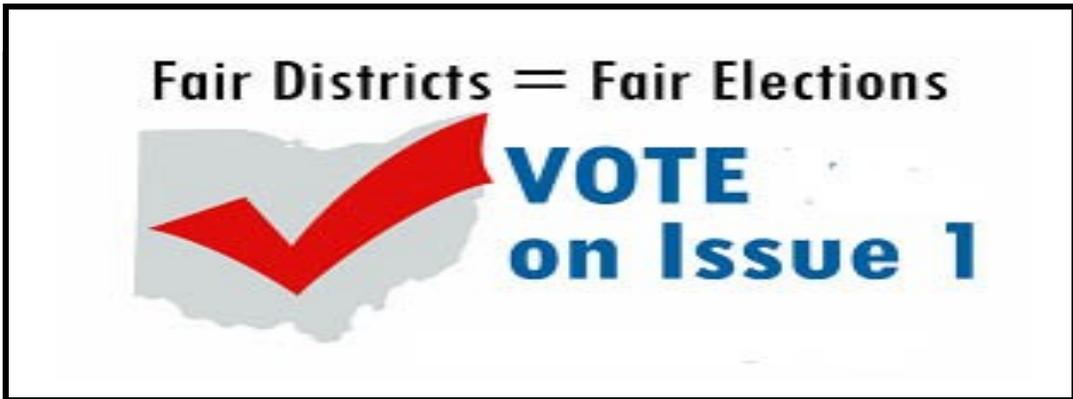
- Citizen education on public issues.
- Assisting human service organizations in evaluating their programs, and
- Providing the best possible information to decision makers responding to changing human and urban needs.

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Ohio Redistricting Reform on November Ballot

A REPORT ON AIR'S WORK ON ISSUE I

Since last February, Applied Information Resources, assisted by a grant from the Seasongood Foundation, has worked at the local level to educate citizens about the need for campaign reform. Although the grant proposal acknowledges the importance of addressing the negative impact of "big money" on political campaigns, AIR emphasized that its immediate focus would concentrate on redistricting reform in Ohio. This decision was based on the fact that the Ohio General Assembly last December enacted a proposed Constitutional Amendment that significantly changes the state redistricting process, and this proposal will be approved or rejected by voters this fall.

AIR's work on this issue took the form of planning and conducting public forums on redistricting reform. It also organized an informal coalition of civic and grassroots organizations concerned about campaign reform. It continues to plan and carry out these activities, and it provides this report as part this project.

Since citizens must review and then vote on the Constitutional Amendment proposal in the coming weeks, an important section of this report must be a detailed description of the redistricting procedural changes that comprise State Issue I. Such a description follows in the next section.

ISSUE I - AN OHIO CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROPOSAL

If approved by a

majority of Ohio voters this fall, Issue I will become an Amendment to the Ohio Constitution, and it will replace the process currently in place for drawing the district lines for the election of members of the Ohio House and Senate. Drawing new district lines takes place every ten years based on the new Census population data, and Issue I would go into effect in 2021 after the completion of the next U.S. Census.

The Proposed New Redistricting Commission - Under Issue I, the Ohio Redistricting Commission, a bipartisan body, replaces the current Apportionment Board. The new Commission includes the Governor, the Secretary of State, the Auditor, an appointee by the Speaker of the Ohio House, an appointee by the Presi-

(Continued on page 2)

Criteria for the Drawing of the Districts

(Continued from page 1)

dent of the Ohio Senate, an appointee by the Majority Leader of the House, and an appointee by the Minority Leader of the Senate. This seven member Commission will have the responsibility for creating the new district maps for the Ohio House and Senate, and at least two members of the minority political party serving on the Commission must vote to approve a new redistricting plan in order for it to go into effect for a ten year period. Without at least two votes from the minority party, the redistricting plan

A second criterion essentially forbids gerrymandering. "No General Assembly district plan shall be drawn primarily to favor or disfavor a political party." Having this language in the Ohio Constitution gives citizens a legal right to challenge any potential gerrymandering that should happen to occur. In contrast, when the district maps were challenged in 2012, the Ohio Supreme Court said: "The Ohio Constitution does not mandate political neutrality in the reapportionment of House and Senate districts."

What are the criticisms of the proposed Amendment? Initially reformers were disappointed that this proposal only changes the process for mapping state districts rather than also taking on how Congressional districts are drawn. It is acknowledged, however, that the General Assembly would not have passed this current proposed Constitutional Amendment if Congressional districts had also been included.

A second criticism focuses on the composition of the new Redistricting Commission. Instead of a non-partisan body as proposed in 2012, it would be a bipartisan Commission made up of elected state officials similar to the current Apportionment Board. Unlike the current system, it does call for bipartisan support from the members of the Commission in order to pass a new ten-year plan.

Diverse Support - Besides traditional reform groups such as the Ohio League of Women Voters and Common Cause/Ohio, Issue I has won broad and diverse support. The Ohio Republican, Democratic, and Green Parties have endorsed it. Other organizations include the Ohio Council of Churches, the Ohio State Bar Association, the ACLU of Ohio, the Ohio Education Association, Faith In Public Life, the United Auto Workers Region 2B, the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing, and Applied Information Resources. The mantra of its supporters is: "It's time that Ohio voters got a fair chance to elect their representatives rather than elected officials picking their voters."



A further guideline that reinforces criterion II requires that the overall allocation of seats "corresponds closely to the statewide political preferences of the voters of Ohio." This preference of Ohioans will be measured by the average of votes cast for the major parties' candidates over the previous decade

goes into effect for only four years, and then an entirely new mapping process must be undertaken. Furthermore, the Commission must do its work within the framework of very specific criteria.

The Redistricting Commission must draw new district maps according to the following criteria. An important criterion will keep communities together by calling for the creation of compact districts. It requires map makers to draw state districts that strictly minimize the number of splits in counties, municipalities, and contiguous townships. Under this guideline, the priority is to keep large counties, other counties, and municipalities from being split into two or three districts. This guideline would put an end to those oddly shaped districts that currently split counties and cities into multiple parts in order to preserve Ohio General Assembly seats for a particular political party.

A very important criterion requires a transparent map making process. All meetings of the Commission will be open to the public. In addition, the Amendment calls for at least three public hearings during the redistricting process that allow citizens to make suggestions, ask questions, or even submit their own redistricting plans to the Commission. Finally, after the Commission has completed a plan, it must hold a public hearing where members explain how they came up with their proposed state district maps.

What happens if the final maps do not appear to be fair? The Ohio Supreme Court is named in the Amendment as the place for citizens to file a complaint concerning the Commission's completed maps. If the Court rules that a district or districts fail to meet the mapping criteria, then the Commission is responsible for redrawing the district or districts.

CONTRIBUTIONS HELP AIR, INC. WITH COMMUNITY WORK

AIR depends on individual contributions to support our work. We are a charitable 501(c)(3) organization and your contributions help fund such projects as campaign finance reform, political reform and studies in racism and homelessness in Cincinnati. We invite you to assist us as AIR takes on community issues and challenges.

\$500 \$100 \$50 \$25

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

Applied Information Resources
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You can now donate online at www.airinc.org

AIR, Inc. is Partnering with the Woman's City Club On Economic Justice

AIR, Inc. is partnering with the Woman's City Club to develop a new model seeking to bring about change and progress in our community by joining human interaction through meetings and forum gatherings, and a social media space. That is the combination of our *Economic Justice Roundtable* with the WCC's *Thriving Cincinnati* web site. By its very nature, the web site is a very powerful tool for information dissemination, sharing of opinions, refinement of ideas and a platform for advocacy.

The *Economic Justice*

Roundtable serves as the face to face forum for individuals and organizations grappling with the many facets of income inequality. By identifying common themes, concerns and causes which the participants [not members] can act on either as organizations or individuals the goal is to advance the prospect of achieving a Just Economy. The group has met twice and a third meeting will be scheduled soon.

The *Thriving Cincinnati* web site is crucial to the design. It serves as the repository for general infor-

mation, research documents, contact lists, timetables, and event schedule sharing. It also offers a means for advocates to acknowledge a shared set of values.

One Cincinnati issue on the horizon may offer a test run for the impact of a coordinated effort involving individuals, institutions and a dedicated web presence. If the Wage Theft ordinance which the Interfaith Workers Center has proposed goes to Council, many in the group will have an interest in sharing their views with individual councilmen.

Preview of Upcoming Economic Justice Events

Thursday, October 29, Jubilee – An Evening with the Rev. Canon Rob Rhodes and Dr. Adam Clark, professor of theology, Xavier University. 6:30 -8:30 @ Christ Church Cathedral, 318 E.4th, 45202

Thursday, November 12, Thursday- The Cooperative Economy: A Panel on Cooperatives in Cincinnati - @ 7pm - Xavier University: Cintas Center 1634 Herald Ave.

Friday & Saturday- November 13 & 14, a national discussion -Union Co-op Symposium @ North Presbyterian Church 4222 Hamilton Ave. 45223

Friday, November 13 - Creating an Economy that Works for All Party-Letter Carriers Hall, 4100 Colerain Ave. 45223

Monday, November 16, -7 PM, Cintas Banquet Hall (upper floor) Join Mark Anielski, Canadian author of *The Economics of Happiness*. For more information, contact Nancy Bertaux, bertaux@xavier.edu

Tuesday & Wednesday, November 17 & 18 – Neighborhood Economics – ECI - the Gallagher Theatre, Xavier University: 1634 Herald Ave.

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Place Stamp Here

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We're on the web!

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AIR, INC.

*Public Policy and
Research*

Preview of Upcoming Forums

Thursday, October 29, Community Issues Forum, Wage Theft, Brennan Grayson, Interfaith Workers Center. Noon @ Christ Church Cathedral, 318 E. 4th, 45202

Thursday, November 12, Noon— Community Issues Forum, Christ Church Cathedral, 318 E. 4th, 45202 Incarceration and re-entry

Thursday, November 19 - Community Issues Forum, noon @ Christ Church Cathedral, 318 E. 4th, 45202— Kevin Jones of *Neighborhood Economics*

Thursday, December 1, Noon - Community Issues Forum, Christ Church Cathedral, 318 E. 4th, 45202 Police Community Relations - **Black Lives Matter**

For a listing of events, see www.airinc.org