

SUPREME COURT LETS STAND LOW CONTRIBUTION LIMITS IN AKRON, OHIO

In a major development for the campaign finance reform movement, on Tuesday, January 21, 2003, the Supreme Court rejected a challenge to lower campaign contribution limits passed by voters in Akron, Ohio, in November 1998, for Akron's local elections. The limits ranging from \$100-\$300 are among the lowest in the country. The Supreme Court's action today left standing a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit upholding the limits. In powerful judicial language, the appeals court had said:

“Money buys many of the good things in life, but no one has cited any constitutional history suggesting that money is supposed to be the milk of politics or that large political contributions are a necessary ingredient of representative government protected by the Constitution. Constitutional history does not support the idea that laissez faire economics is embodied in the First Amendment to assure the right to make large campaign contributions.”

NVRI congratulates all the citizens of Akron who have worked tirelessly for the passage of this initiative and for its defense in court, including the people of the Yes on 11 Campaign, the American Friends Service Committee, and the Catholic Commission. NVRI also congratulates the intervenors' co-counsel, Warner Mendenhall and Brian Williams, who have achieved this victory in spite of the fact that the defendant in this case, the City of Akron, has resisted the voters' will and formally switched sides in this litigation, joining the plaintiffs. NVRI assisted the Akron reform effort by preparing briefs on behalf of the intervenors in the Sixth Circuit and in the U.S. Supreme Court.