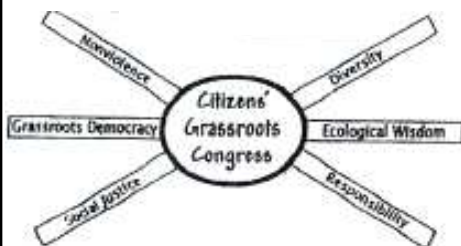


The People's Agenda for Central Ohio

2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress Report



Organizations represented:

Central Ohioans for Peace
Central Ohio Green Education Fund
Columbus Community Bill of Rights
Columbus Institute for Contemporary Journalism/ Free Press
Democratic Socialists of Central Ohio
Move to Amend
Represent Columbus
Socialist Alternative

Why a Citizens Grassroots Congress?

Public policy in Columbus is usually made through an iron triangle: the first part of the triangle are the wealthy donors and special interest groups that generally reside outside the city send checks to the Mayor or City Council President, the second part, and then ordinances are passed. Then the city bureaucracy, the third part of the triangle, go to work on behalf of these politicians and their major donors. In order to break the power of this iron triangle of the elite, a few politicians and the public administrations that serve them, the people in public interest grassroots organizations must be directly involved in setting city policy.

If we are to heed Lincoln's famous phrase: "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people," we must provide spaces and forums where the people and community organization representatives can openly discuss their public policy preferences.

Columbus City Council meetings, where every issue voted on is an "emergency" and nothing may be discussed unless it is slated for a unanimous vote that night and where discussion is limited to three people speaking for three minutes, a counter procedure must exist. That's what the Citizens Grassroots Congress is -- ordinary citizens active in their community. As a people united, we are far more capable of outlining the problems facing their neighborhoods and coming up with practical solutions than the 7 at-large representatives, all from one party, who are reliant on the money from the 1percent.

The 2016 Pre-Election Citizens' Grassroots Congress met for a half-day session on September 11, 2016 at the Whetstone Library, 3909 North High Street, to propose a grassroots agenda for central Ohio. The Congress was sponsored by: the Central Ohio Green Education Fund and the Columbus Institute for Contemporary Journalism/Free Press. The event brought together 22 individuals, affiliated with at least 8 community organizations.

Any individual or group's representatives attending the Citizens Grassroots Congress could propose a public policy. Each one had an opportunity to explain their proposal to the group and answer questions regarding the issue. All proposals were voted on and all were eligible to pass with a majority of the vote. Once all the proposals were presented, the group ranked each one from 1-11 based on priority. All proposals approved are listed in this report.

Many of the proposals passed at the 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress are already being implemented in other municipalities throughout the nation. While the following proposals may seem visionary to some in central Ohio, it is better to think of them as a new, a much-needed practical realism.

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Grassroots Democracy Resolutions

A Proposal to Reform Columbus City Council

WHEREAS, the City of Columbus has a council of seven members, all elected “at large” (citywide elections in in a single, multi-member district); and

WHEREAS, a small council – one smaller than every big Ohio city except Dayton’s, despite the fact that our population and geography are far larger than every other Ohio city – centralizes democratic power in a handful of political bosses and thus constrains policy choices; and

WHEREAS, a seven member council in a city of over 800,000 does not provide adequate representation of the interests of our large and increasingly diverse city and its neighborhoods spread out over more than 225 square miles; and

WHEREAS, this form of government is a paternalistic relic of the late 1800s and early 1900s, spawned by Anglo business elites across the country to retain control of city governments where German and Italian immigrants were developing ward-based political power; and

WHEREAS, this form of government saw a resurgence across the Deep South following enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to suppress the election of African Americans; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Congress found that such a voting system can create an unlawful “voter dilution effect, and in 1982 Amendments to the Voting Rights Act the Congress expanded the general provisions related to discriminatory voting laws in Section 2 by changing from intent to effect; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Justice subsequently prosecuted more than 300 cases to end the discriminatory effect of local at large voting laws; and

WHEREAS, Columbus is the only big city to retain this anarchic voting structure, with Detroit, Austin, and Seattle in recent years becoming the last of America’s big cities to move toward the more progressive council district format; and

WHEREAS, citywide elections are prohibitively expensive for candidates – with unique problems for nonincumbent challengers, and

WHEREAS, in the 2011 and 2013 municipal elections, the council president through both direct contributions and in-kind expenditures provided 57% of the campaign spending for 52% for Eileen Paley, Zach Klein, 72% for Michelle Mills and Priscilla Tyson , 84% for Herschel Craig, and 90% for Troy Miller – indicating that the citywide elections are too expensive for even 6 of the 7 incumbents to fund their own campaigns, which problem was particularly severe for African American candidates over that time period; and

WHEREAS, such fundraising dependency calls into question the independence of our elected council members, and

WHEREAS, non-incumbent candidates for council and other engaged parties continue to report the intimidation of potential campaign donors by incumbent officials; and

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WHEREAS, ethical lapses, pay-to-play allegations, and bribery and extortion convictions related to campaign contributions in the past three years have contributed to a reasonable and legitimate citizen distrust in the public-serving conduct our council; and

WHEREAS, the public deserves confidence in the honest and faithful service of our elected officials; and

WHEREAS, such confidence has been shaken by the aforementioned facts; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Columbus deserve and must demand an electoral system designed to produce fair and competitive elections by uncompromised public servants; and

WHEREAS, campaign financing system has not been addressed by local elected officials to alleviate concerns; and

WHEREAS, the council's mid-term appointment policy and practices need revision to return control of elected officials to the people of Columbus without elevating people as candidates through an appointed incumbency; and

WHEREAS, although an African American was elected to council in 1880 under the ward format, after the change to an all at large council in 1914 it was 55 years (1969) until another African American member was elected to council, and since that election only one African American member of council (Jennette Bradley) has begun serving on council through an election, all the rest through appointment; and

WHEREAS, through its voiced support for full-time employment status, institutional lack of support for campaign finance provisions designed to reduce the prevalence of large and corporate contributions to campaigns, and voted support for writing ballot language of citizen petitions which is a clear conflict of interest the council appears to be on course to create a self-selecting ruling class that diminishes the role of citizens in our own governance, rather than supporting the growth of citizen legislators; and

WHEREAS, the Citizen's Grassroots Congress continues to believe that a democratic government is a government of the people, by the people and for the people, and that it is our right and civic responsibility to pass such a healthy form of government on to future generations;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the September 2016 Citizens' Grassroots Congress calls for the immediate reform of Columbus City Council, with such reforms to include: 1) reform of the mid-term appointment process, 2) support for a city council elected primarily by single-member districts to serve as part-time citizen legislators, 3) enactment of strong campaign finance reform to include a system of caps on contributions to campaigns and restrictions on "pay to play;"

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council and the Charter Review Commission are strongly urged to move forward with meaningful reforms on each of these issues by January 31, 2017; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that citizens and organizations are encouraged to strike and support solidarity on council reform by opposing all levy requests by all public entities until such reforms are enacted and Columbus has a democratic city government controlled by the citizens of Columbus, not by corporate and political interests, that is thus deserving of public trust and support.

A Proposal to Oppose Ohio House Bill 476

This proposal is for the Citizens Grassroots Congress and their constituencies to support the Freedom to Boycott in Ohio Coalition in their efforts to defeat the anti-BDS bill, HB 476. Although this bill specifically targets for-profit entities that boycott Israeli products, including those made in illegal settlements, it sends a chilling message about the use of boycotts for social change that could potentially affect future efforts. This bill makes no distinction between Israel and the territory that it illegally occupies. This law would punish companies/individuals for exercising a constitutionally protected free speech. Actions: As leaders of important social change movements in Columbus, members of the Citizens Grassroots Congress would:

- 1) Apprise their members/contacts of this bill
- 2) Encourage writing to Ohio House representatives during the summer recess to oppose this bill if it is introduced for a vote in the house in the next session.
- 3) Widely spread the word if a demonstration is called about the HB 476,
- 4) Inform members of your groups if there are opportunities to testify in hearings in the Ohio Senate and encourage them to submit written and oral testimony.

More information: <http://palestinelegal.org/ohio>

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the Freedom to Boycott in Ohio Coalition to defeat the anti-BDS bill.

A Proposal to Restore Funding and Public Programming on Public Access Cable TV

This proposal is for the city of Columbus to reinstate public access cable television in Columbus. Encourage city government to open up the public access to the people of Columbus and provide funding and equipment.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the full reinstatement of public access cable television by the city of Columbus.

A Proposal to Support Move to Amend Efforts

Proposal: Columbus Initiative in Support of Movement to Amend the U.S. Constitution to Establish That Corporations, or Other Artificial Entities, Are Not People and That Money is Not Speech

Sponsors: Members of Central Ohio's Move to Amend Affiliate

Purpose of Initiative:

1. Establishes a Democracy Day

Mayor and City Council shall designate one day in the month of April as "Democracy Day." Each year on this day the Mayor and City Council shall sponsor a Public Hearing in a public space within the City. The City shall publicize the Public Hearing on its website and through area media at least one (1) month in advance of the Hearing. The Public Hearing will examine the impact of political contributions of corporations, Political Action Committees (PACs) and Super-PACs on the City. The Mayor and at least one (1) City Councilperson shall submit testimony at the public hearing. Citizens of Columbus will be permitted to submit oral testimony for a period of at least five (5) minutes per citizen. Additionally any Columbus citizen may submit written testimony.

2. Formally states Columbus citizens' support for an amendment to abolish the undemocratic concepts that corporations are people and money is speech.

Within one (1) week following the Public Hearing, the Mayor shall send a letter to the leaders of the Ohio House and Senate, and the city's U.S Congressional Representatives, and both Ohio U.S. Senators, stating that the citizens of Columbus voted in support of a Citizens Initiative calling for a constitutional amendment declaring:

A) Only individual human beings, not corporations or other artificial entities, are legal persons with constitutional rights.

B) Money is not equivalent to speech and therefore regulating political contributions and spending is not equivalent to limiting political speech.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the Movement to Amend the U.S. Constitution to Establish That Corporations, or Other Artificial Entities, Are Not People and That Money is Not Speech.

A Proposal for Fusion

This proposal recommends working for fusion or ranked run-off voting, a process to increase access and representation for third parties, mainly to bring attention to the fact that structural impediments such as the winner-take-all, first-past-the post format that American elections use makes it hard for a third party vote to have much meaning since they have no possibility of actual input once the winner is declared. The process of fusion (meaning that a candidate can run on both a major and minor party line) was in effect widely until the late 1880s, when major parties killed it. It survives only in 7 or 8 states, especially in New York City, where the Working Families Party was able to gain some influence based on the number of votes they brought for the candidate who also used their ballot line. This would be a long fight, since major parties would fight it, but it would be a step toward a more parliamentary system. Ranked voting or run-off systems would also be helpful in increasing the influence of third parties.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the efforts for implementing fusion or ranked run-off voting in Columbus.

A Proposal for an All At-Large Proportional Voting System for Columbus City Council

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this section is create a system where voters are able to vote for multiple members of Council, and if there are only a few candidates a voter especially likes, the voter can amplify their support. We should be grateful so many people step up to the plate for public service, and if voters wish to empower their neighbors, then why should the fact a different neighbor received a few more votes fully eliminate another's ability to formally affect the public apparatus? The blasé acceptance of the status quo of taxation without representation is despicable and traitorous.

In 2014, statewide candidates from the Green and Libertarian parties each earned in excess of 100,000 votes from Ohioans. At the same time, Ohio House of Representative districts were won with as little as 16,758 total votes, with the winning candidate, Mike Curtin, earning 9,282 votes. Yet despite the impressive showing of non-major party candidates in statewide races, citizens freely associated with Green and Libertarian Parties received no representation with their taxation.

Tyranny is not only on the State of Ohio level but also the local level in Columbus. The anti-democratic Franklin County Democratic Party has repeatedly had numerous members of its party elected to Columbus City Council, but before re-election the Councilpersons would step down, so that a new member of Democratic Party would be appointed to Columbus City Council before sitting for their first election. The new members of Council, who were not elected to Council before serving, due to their appointments are unethically granted "incumbent advantages" for their first election for a Council seat. These persons get to claim experience for the seat, and are placed in a position to generate free "earned media" increasing their name recognition and association of their name with a Council seat.

Geographic representation is unlikely to ever represent anything other than the anti-democratic wills of those who are awarded the task of drawing new districts. It's unlikely small, but significant, subcultures will achieve representation by their government—unless the group is sufficiently concentrated in a contiguous manner, and such area is chosen for representation by the drawers of an election map among the various alternate ways to divide a population and make an election not about the hopes and dreams of people but instead the inanimate wills of geography and the holders of power within an area.

Similarly, the entire concept of winner-take-all politics ensures the government is more easily co-opted by the privileged few able to purchase media access, ballot access, paid canvassers and event production expenses of idea dissemination and collective action—especially when the victors not only gain control but also instantly silence any opposition and dissent in formal state processes. Winner-take-all, makes the ability of the government to forge consensus and catalyze efficient collective action among a diverse electorate unlikely, since only those that were able to dominate, silence and subdue their fellow citizens are guaranteed to have their voices heard and recorded by the public apparatus.

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Perhaps it is best that the capital city pioneer a system that ensures all citizens are represented by their government, and that all citizens' representatives are empowered to propose alternatives and hold power accountable. If the City of Columbus can create a new system of diverse power, realizing our strength in working together, then we might develop a model that can be replicated to ensure all Ohioans receive representation with taxation by the state of Ohio in the future, not just those with influence or privileged abilities to pay the transaction costs.

II. Voter Has Total of 5 votes to Allocate

Each voter will have a maximum of 5 votes to allocate for City Councilpersons. A voter can give a single Councilperson 5 votes, while voting for no other Candidate. A voter can give up to 5 separate candidates each 1 vote for City Council. There are a few other non-enumerated combinations of possible vote allocations among 4 candidates or less. Voters may allocate less than the 5 vote maximum.

III. Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power

Councilperson's power to legislatively enact ordinances and resolutions or any other powers shall be proportionate to a Councilperson's support in the city. Councilperson's compensation and budget allocation for staffing and other expenses shall be proportionate to their support in the city. The formula for determining a certain Councilperson's power for enabling government acts and for city budget allocations, hereinafter referenced as the *Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power*, shall be equal to numerator: the total number of votes allocated to a certain Councilperson in reference, divided by, the denominator: total number of votes allocated in the election. The maximum number of votes allocated in a respective election would be 5 times the total number of voters, though voters are free to cast less than 5 votes, in so doing decreasing the total votes allocated in the election in reference.

IV. Simple Majority of Councilpersons' Power for Passing Ordinances or Resolutions

A Councilperson's power thus shall be the outcome of their particular *Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power*. For example, a Councilperson who received a total of 5 votes, in an election where voters allocated a total of 100 votes, would result in the Councilperson possessing 5% Councilperson Power. A simple majority, (50+%) of the summation of all Councilperson Powers, (the sum of all *Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power*), is required for Council to pass an ordinance or resolution. To clarify, the previous ordinance adoption system required a majority of Councilperson's vote in the affirmative for passage, instead the new ordinance adoption system shall require not a majority of Councilpersons' vote in the affirmative for the ordinance, but instead a majority of Councilperson Power as determined by the sums of all *Formulas for Councilperson in Reference's Power* for all Councilpersons for a particular Council year in reference.

V. 6/7 Majority of Councilpersons' Power for Emergency Measures

A super majority of 6/7, (85.71+%) of the summation of all Councilperson Powers, (the sum of all *Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power*), is required for Council to enact emergency measures.

VI. 6/7 Majority of Adjusted Councilpersons' Power for Councilperson Expulsion

A super majority of 6/7, (85.71+%) of the summation of the adjusted Councilperson Powers, (the sum of all *Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power* minus the Councilperson Power of the Councilperson under consideration for expulsion in the denominator of the total votes allocated—thus preventing or inhibiting a powerful Councilperson from blocking expulsion), is required for Council to expel a member of council for reasons stated in Sec. 9-3 of the City Charter.

VII. Simple Majority of Councilperson Power Necessary for Quorum

Quorum requirements for council meetings shall require a majority of voter power be represented at a meeting in reference as informed by the *Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power* for the meeting to be properly opened and the body to conduct business, enact ordinances or any other formal powers. To clarify, the previous quorum system for opening a Council Meeting needed a majority of Councilpersons to attend the meeting to satisfy quorum requirements, instead the new quorum requirement system shall require not a majority of Councilpersons, but a majority of Councilpersons' Power as determined by sum of all *Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power* for a meeting to be opened and for Council to conduct business or engage in Council legislative acts, etc.

VIII. All Councilpersons with more than 1% Power Shall Have Seat At Meetings

All Councilpersons elected with a "*Formula for Councilperson in Reference's Power*" greater than 1% shall be guaranteed a chair to sit in at all City Council meetings.

IX. Organization of Council

Rules, committees and any other management tools derived from Sec 9-2 of the City Charter have no mandatory binding precedence for future City Councils. Councilpersons today can only affect the rules and committees directly when they are in office, they can in no way bind the hands of future City Councils.

X. Annual Elections & No Primary for Councilpersons

City Council elections for all seats will occur at the November General election every year. No longer shall there be a primary for Councilpersons.

XI. Council Candidate's Optional Automatic Succession Plan

Since a political party's members hijacked the City Council and started having Councilperson's step down before re-election so a new member of the local Democratic Party machine would be illegitimately awarded an incumbent advantage so as to help inhibit city government's ability to represent more than the privately co-opted cabal, candidates who anticipate not completing their one year term may, up to 30 days before an election, file their "*Automatic Succession Plan*" with up to 5 vice candidates in an ordinal ranking of successors from first choice to last choice should the

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Councilperson vacate the seat after election but before the next term. *Automatic Succession Plans* may be filed at any City of Columbus government office. Within 10 days of a Councilperson vacancy, all of the 5 possible successors must either accept or reject the offer to fill the seat by filing a letter of acceptance with at any City of Columbus government office, not filing a letter as so proscribed shall be deemed rejection by a possible successor. If more than one successor responds in the affirmative, then the most preferred in the succession plan shall be given preference and automatically appointed to the office upon filing their letter at a City of Columbus government office. Should a vacancy re-arise post previously installing a successor to a City Council office, then those lower ranked than the intermediate successor following in the *Automatic Succession Plan* shall be offered the position as described above with the 10-day process until list of 5 names in the *Automatic Succession Plan*— who were authorized by voters by their votes for the original Councilperson who created the list—is exhausted. Should no permitted successor answer in the affirmative in the charter defined manner, then voters can regain representation at the next election voting for new, hopefully competent, candidates.

XII. Requisite Signatures for Candidacy & Abolition of Nominating Committee

Candidates for City Council, who wish to have their name on the ballot must submit a petition with at least 10 valid signatures to any City of Columbus government office at least 60 days before the election. The anti-democratic Nominating Committee process requiring 5 people be on a committee for someone to collect signatures as constructed in City Charter 41-3 is hereby abolished in regards to candidate petitions for city council.

XIII. Saving clause

If any section or part of a section proves to be invalid or unconstitutional, the same shall not be held to invalidate or impair the validity, force or effect of any other subsection of this section unless it clearly appear that such other section or part of a section is wholly or necessarily dependent for its operation upon the section or part of a section so held unconstitutional or invalid.

XIV. Preference Clause

Should other parts of the charter conflict with the provisions of this section, this section is to be given all preference, such that this section take effect while the other conflicting provisions inactivated in regards to any conflicts with this section.

Sections of Charter Changed by this Amendment:

1. Sec. 3, changed how council selected
2. Sec. 4, only one year terms now, no more complex stuff
3. Sec. 5, no more council person appointments
4. Sec. 5-1 & 5-2, replaced by vice candidate list
5. Sec. 9-2, modified so previous council rules and committees hold no binding precedence on incoming Council Persons

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6. Sec. 9-3, regarding Council Person expulsion from office instead of 6/7 Council persons, now 6/7 vote power.
7. Sec. 15, adjusted City Council Compensation as allocated by the “Formula for Council Person in Reference’s Power”, the Citizen’s Commission on Elected Official Compensation (discussed in Sec. 15-1) can choose the total amount allocated to all Council Person and their staff for salaries, but cannot change how it is allocated to each person.
8. Sec. 17, regarding quorum, quorum now about majority of Council Person Power in attendance
9. Sec. 18, similar to quorum, no longer about 4 council persons, but instead majority of Council Person Power
10. Sec. 22, not about 6/7 supermajority for emergency measures but 6/7 of voting power
11. Sec. 41 (b), eliminate primary for Council persons
12. Sec. 41-3 (2), 1000 signature requirement, dropped to 10 for city council races, no more nominating committee.
13. Sec. 42-7, Council petitions can be filed at any City of Columbus government office.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the idea of the proportional voting system for Columbus City Council.

Social and Economic Justice Resolutions

A Proposal for an Increase in the Minimum Wage to \$15 hour

This proposal recommends the establishment of a City Charter Amendment requiring employers with 15 or more employees and a gross income over \$500,000 to pay their employees a minimum wage of \$15.00 an hour effective Jan 1, 2018. Tipped employees would receive no less than 50% of the established minimum wage set by this ordinance. Further annual increases would continue and be based on the rate of inflation. No lower than \$11 if negotiated.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the increase in the minimum wage in the city of Columbus.

A Proposal to Adopt the Anti-Corruption Act

The recommendation that Columbus City Council adopt strong anti-corruption language as part of the review of Columbus City Council structure and governance. The American Anti-Corruption Act sets a standard for city, state and federal laws that break big money's grip on politics:

- Stop political bribery by making it illegal for lobbyists to lobby a politician and donate to their campaign. You can lobby, or you can donate, but you can't do both.
- End secret money so Americans know who is buying political power.
- Change how elections are funded to give every voter a voice

Every town, city, state, and county has a unique political makeup, so every Anti-Corruption Act is uniquely tailored to the needs of each community. Every municipal and state Anti-Corruption Act creates common-sense ethics, conflict-of-interest, transparency, and campaign finance laws. State Acts create the opportunity for federal candidates from that state to campaign on the anti-corruption platform – accountable to their constituents, not special interests. Many communities around the U.S. have passed anti-corruption resolutions or adopted their own anti-corruption legislation. There are two statewide ballot initiatives that will be voted on in November in Washington and South Dakota.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the adoption of an Anti-Corruption Act for the Columbus City Council.

A Proposal to adopt a City of Columbus Tax Credit

This proposal is to waive payment of Columbus income taxes for the first \$8,000 of wages for individuals making \$32,000 a year or less. This \$8,000 income tax credit is phased out beginning at \$32,000 but continues on a dollar for dollar basis up to \$40,000 where it fully expires. Wages of \$34,000 equal a tax credit of \$6,000.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports a new tax credit for low wage earners in the city of Columbus.

Sustainability and the Environment Resolutions

A Proposal to Adopt the Columbus Community Bill of Rights

This is a proposal that the City of Columbus adopt the Columbus Community Bill of Rights (CCBOR) to protect the community from polluters so we can have clean soil, water, air and sustainable energy. The CCBOR would serve to prevent corporations from polluting the environment in and around the city of Columbus. If corporations do not comply, the CCBOR would give citizens the right to sue because their Bill of Rights were violated.

Be it resolved that the September 2016 Citizens Grassroots Congress supports the passage of the Columbus Community Bill of Rights.

Summary and Next Steps

All participants at the 2016 Grassroots Congress were given the opportunity to rank order the proposals as to priority.

The proposal with the top priority is the proposal to reform Columbus City Council. While the Grassroots Congress acknowledges that an issue pertaining to the Council's structure recently appeared on the ballot and failed, they still recognize ongoing problems with the current Columbus city charter. The proposal includes many charter revisions, and since no member of the Grassroots Congress was selected to the Charter Reform Commission, we urge those currently working on the Columbus City Charter to use our top priority proposal as a guideline to reforming city government.

The ranking of City Council reform and the democratization of Columbus city government reflects the belief that there will never be true social change in the city until the Council is changed. The current 7-member at-large Council functions to do the bidding of the most powerful people in central Ohio, not the ordinary people. Until the structure of Council is altered and "pay to play" politics ends, no meaningful change toward grassroots democracy will occur.

The second priority proposal was for the Columbus Community Bill of Rights. The belief that people in this city have a fundamental right to clean air, water, soil and a sustainable living environment represents not only the wave of the future, but the sentiment of the majority. If this Bill of Rights passed in Columbus, it would put potential polluters on notice that they will no longer be protected by a corrupt system that allows the for-profit poisoning of our water, air and soil.

All over the planet, and in our own nation, where the Lakota Sioux are currently opposing the Dakota Access pipeline running through their sacred land, people are standing up for clean air and water. As the largest indigenous gathering since Custer was defeated is occurring as we write this, a new consciousness grows that water is life and we must protect it.

The third top priority proposal is the \$15 minimum wage. In the same way the Grassroots Congress recognizes that it is not sustainable to poison our water and air, we prioritize the nourishing and protection of central Ohio workers and that our friends and neighbors need a living wage. The Grassroots Congress endorses the nationwide "Fight for \$15" and believes that a sufficient minimum wage will stimulate sustainable economic growth in our community and business environment.

This report is to be released to the public, the media, and elected officials. Members of the Citizens Grassroots Congress will be collaborating together on the top three proposals and all the proposals over the next few months, and years, to help create social change.

The next Citizens Grassroots Congress looks ahead to issues facing our community in 2017, and will be held:

**November 12, 2016
9am - 5pm
Northwood High building
2231 N. High Street, Columbus Ohio 43201
RSVP: cogreened@gmail.com
614-253-2571**

**The Citizens Grassroots Congress is a project of the
Central Ohio Green Education Fund**

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