

Susan's Suggestions for the Election of November 4, 2014

As always, I offer these suggestions because of the importance of casting an informed vote. For our community to count, our votes must be countable, and we have a responsibility to our greater community and a mitzvah to show up and vote. Local elections in many ways effect our daily living in an up close and personal way and are therefore just as important if not more so than national ones.

By popular demand, in order to make printing easier, this guide consists of two sections: The Quick Voting version followed by the Expanded Explanations. I've noted certain sections you will want to check because there is no room for even minor explanation on the cover page.

However you choose to vote, please make a point of doing so.

Governor: **John Kasich and Mary Taylor**

Attorney General: **Mike Dewine**

Auditor: **Dave Yost**

Secretary of State: **Jon Husted** (*see important note following*)

Treasurer of State: **Josh Mandel**

State Senator: **Sandra Williams**

State Representative District 9: **Janine Boyd** (*for comments on State Rep 8, see below*)

County Executive: **Armond Budish**

Member of County Council: **Anthony Hairston**

Justice of Supreme Court (two positions) **Sharon Kennedy** and **Judi French**

Judges(countywide): (*listed in order, not all races are competitive, endorsements are only on names where I had reliable information to endorse, competitive races in **bold***) Sean Gallagher, Larry Jones, Patrician Blackmon, Nancy Fuerst, Brendan Sheehan, Nancy Russo, **Pamela Barker**, Nancy Mc Donnell, Robert McClelland, **Mathew McMonagle**, Deena Calabrese Joan Synenberg, Rosemary Gold **Francine (Frankie) Goldberg**

Issue 5: Cleveland Heights -University Heights Library Tax Levy -No recommendation; *please see notes below*

Issue 6: Tri-C Tax Levy- No recommendation; *please see notes below*

County Charter Issues 11, 12, 13 - amendments for the smoother running of county, *see notes below*, **Vote YES**

County Charter Amendment 14 - Makes Fundamental Voting rights a county issue (instead of state). *See notes below*. **Vote NO**

Expanded Edition

State Offices:

Governor: In a race between the incumbent, John Kasich, who has done a good job, been good for the state, worked across the aisle, and supported issues important to our community as with School Vouchers, he deserves our support; despite his opponent, Ed Fitzgerald, being a local friend, but whose integrity in government came under question due to the driver's license scandal. Jon Kasich emerges as the stronger candidate and has the experience of his previous four years in office. **Vote Kasich.**

A/G, State Auditor, and Treasurer: As with the above, they have done a good job, have a favorable relationship with our community and should remain in office. **Vote DeWine, Yost, Mandel**

Secretary of State: This is a tough one because both *Nina Turner and Jon Husted* are friends of our community. I have personally met with both and find them each impressive and competent. While I look forward to supporting Nina Turner in a future bid for office, the fact remains that Jon Husted has done an impressive job in working his way through to fair solutions in the divisive topic of voter rights as well as making business registration easier in Ohio. A vote against would mean you think he should be sent home, or in other words fired, for a job well done. He deserves to be returned to office. **Vote Jon Husted**

State Representative District 9: Janine Boyd has served our community well as a Cleveland Heights council member. She has friends and ties to our neighborhood and knows who we are. She has a tough, common sense approach to crime, and she has supported our community's growth in acquiring properties desired. My personal opinion of her is that of someone who is bright and hard working.

County Offices:

County Executive: Armond Budish vs. Jack Schron. This race is for the position that heads the County Council. There are 12 council members each elected by their district, plus the Executive, who is elected county-wide. Although I have been very impressed with the campaign Jack Schron has run and the specificity of his ideas, my support goes to Armond Budish because of his strong ties historically in our community as well as his experience in Columbus. Whoever wins, I feel we will be well served at the county level. **Vote Armond Budish**

Judges: I only commented on races where I had information that came from actual people on the ground. While I do refer to the website, Judge4Yourself, I find that speaking to those actually in a courtroom helps adjust for the biases of the ratings giving a stronger picture.

For some I got no valuable information as on the Probate Court race of Russo vs. Sliwinski. Although rating well on the website, because I heard no personal ringing endorsement for Russo, the sitting judge, while Sliwinski is too new and unknown among those I referenced, I cannot feel comfortable commenting on the race. Though I personally found him likeable and knowledgeable, I had no solid, reliable information about either candidate to make a formal recommendation.

It's also worth mentioning that **Francine (Frankie Goldberg)** *has received very high accolades from everyone I've spoken to!* Even die-hard Republicans whisper off the record that they will vote for her. She has a reputation for being bright, fair, hardworking, and responsible -everything you want a judge to be. *Because she is facing in incumbent, she needs our every vote.*

There is one particular race that deserves comment. There are many yard signs up in favor of Judge Pamela Barker. Some of these may be in relation to a false rumor that is circulating: the rumor is that her opponent, Sherrie Miday, is Arab and it follows that we will see Sharia Law creep into our courts if she was allowed on the bench. The truth is that Miday is of Egyptian descent, her family is Coptic Christian; in fact, her father a priest, and she herself a product of private Catholic education. She has a reputation as very likeable and competent, and has the support of some people that I respect. She was well rated on Judge4yourself.

That said, Pamela Barker emerges as the stronger candidate in every aspect. She has experience. Judge4yourself gives her their highest marks. Gov. Kasich appointed her, and she has been tough on crime while being fair during her tenure. Additionally, those that I've spoken to about her all speak highly of her many qualities. She has my recommendation because removing someone who is so highly regarded for the job she's done in favor of a candidate with no judicial track record and only mildly positive recommendations makes little sense. As with Secretary of State where I am highly enthusiastic about the challenger's capabilities, firing someone for a job well done is wrong. Vote Pamela Barker. Vote **Pamela Barker**

Supreme Court Justice: **Judith French** was up front and center arguing the case for vouchers on behalf of Cleveland at the Supreme Court level. She has excellent background and qualifications.

Taxes: Local Issues 5 and 6 (and Bond Issue 98 for UH, some helpful information)

Beachwood residents vote only on issue 6 - the Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) levy.

CH and UH vote on Issue 5 for the CH-UH library levy and Issue 6, which is county wide.

The Facts:

When property values go down, the revenue collected also goes down and by law cannot go back up without the passage of another levy. The library is asking for an additional \$80 per \$100k house, bringing the total to \$273 per year to the library. For Tri-C, we currently pay \$36.69 and the 9 mil increase over 10 years will add another \$31.56 bringing the bill to \$62 annually. These figures are for every \$100,000 worth of house you own. If you value is

more, then your tax bill will be too. Between the two the annual tax bill would be \$335 which is an increase of \$126 per year.

Pro: Both institutions are valued and used by community members. Both would have to make steep cuts and are likely to come back with another levy if this one fails. Unlike the public schools that must have separate levies for their buildings and their operations, both capital and operating expenses are calculated into these levies. (It is worth noting that we will soon vote on a school operating levy as well and then another building one for the elementary which is likely to pass)

Issue 5: The library gets 1/3 of its funding from the state and 2/3 from the community (meaning taxes and outside donors like “Friends”). Since 2009 when the state cut its budget line item to libraries they valiantly made up the losses in what they call invisible cuts like mowing the lawns less often and postponing repairs. They also cut hours of operations like Sundays at the branches reducing payroll expenses, but when they cut Friday hours at Coventry based on actual usage reports, they had protesters with signs showing up. Any further cuts would be visible. They also hope to make renovations to Coventry and UH branches including a much desired (as per their internal surveys) back door access in UH with this levy money. They certainly get kudos for good stewardship. And, they have responded to requests from our community to not only purchase books of interest, but also to re-shelve them where they are easily findable.

To quote the Plain Dealer endorsement on Issue 6, “The levy would be used to keep Tri-C's tuition affordable, support job training and boost technology and equipment, which no community college can do without. If the levy fails, the course reductions and tuition increases that would likely follow would hurt many Tri-C students, including those who are part-time, working and caring for their families while they attend school. A levy failure also would hurt the region by truncating the college-to-skilled-work pipeline that Tri-C has expanded to support local employment.”

We do have community members that benefit from both institutions, and we should indeed have the best public schools, community college programs, and libraries that we can afford.

Con: Our current tax burden is steep. Per \$100,000 of home you own, you currently pay:

Beachwood	\$2091.90
Cleveland Heights	\$3651.06
University Heights	\$3660.24 <i>all numbers per county auditors office</i>

Bearing in mind that most members of our community live in houses valued over that amount, often double, sometimes 4 or 5 times, the tax burden increases commensurately. *(These tables may be helpful in determining your vote for Issue 93, the UH Bond Issue. Please make an informed vote. See more below.)*

Adding to this context: water bills have gone up dramatically; healthcare costs are skyrocketing; Security concerns have caused the schools to asses additional fees, beyond the staggering amounts our community B”H puts towards tuition; and salaries for most people have been stagnant. Further, CH-UH is looking at increasing taxes soon in an operating levy which will then be followed by a building fund levy targeted for elementary schools.

It is at a point where the taxes become a negative factor in the growth of our beautiful community, when potential homebuyers see the costs. As a community we are overburdened by the tax bill already and can no longer afford more.

The institutions promoting the levy do have alternatives. They can consider steeper cuts in light of what the cities or county can afford. Examples: reducing the number of library branch from 4 to 3, raising Tri-C tuition somewhat, perhaps in focused areas; or Tr-C might consolidate and concentrate services more.

We also need to consider whether we wish to support their initiatives. For example, a recent Check-Us-Out newsletter listed a library class for girls including those "identifying" as one. They align themselves with the ALA policy that they should provide materials that parents may find objectionable. Tri-C has programs that should not fall under the purview of government funded "education" like a joint venture with Rock Hall of Fame and the Tri-C Jazz Fest. Tri-C's effectiveness is also in question when compared other local county colleges, specifically Lakeland and Lorain.

Conclusion: I can make no concrete recommendation because these institutions are indeed valued and dear to our community providing services broad and needed, but regretfully too many are struggling too hard to meet the burden already assessed to recommend these increases. Please consider the issues and cast your vote well.

University Heights Bond Issue 93: This would increase your taxes annually by \$70 per \$100,000 property valuation for the purpose of improving parks and recreation. See chart above to find your current assessment and see comments above that are relevant. Please do your research, talk to your neighbors and make an informed vote.

County Issues 11, 12, and 13

Generally, these three County Charter Amendments are part of a series of course corrections aimed at better, more efficiently running the county. Originally county government was led by a triumvirate of three county commissioners. After much disappointment with the concentration of power brought on in no small part by scandal and arrests, we changed our form of government to one with a council of 11 members led by a single County Executive. Each member is voted on by its district. This allows for more diversity of opinion on the council as previously all commissioners were voted county-wide and one party consistently dominated. Now minority voices can and do gain representation. Only one office, the County Executive, is voted on county wide.

At the time, a County Charter akin to a constitution for Cuyahoga County was ratified. It was based on another county that had previously switched to this form of government. As time passed, however, some minor adjustments were seen as improvements. Each must come before the voters to be included in the charter, and on each ballot council sends us a few to consider, based on the recommendation of a committee. Generally speaking, these will lead to more integrity, further decentralize power in a thoughtful manner, and prevent problems- and should therefore be approved (issue 14 is very different, this is 11,12 and 13 only)

Issue 11 - Currently, to run for County Executive, the Charter only requires that you be a resident. By omission, that means someone could move in from out of the area and run for the most powerful seat in county government in just 30 days. This amendment adds the

requirement of 2 years residency insuring time to develop some loyalty and knowledge of Cuyahoga County before putting in a bid to run. The second part addresses problems that might conceivably arise as a result of redistricting which occurs every 10 years in response to census data. If the lines do get redrawn in such a way that a council member finds his residence outside of the area he was elected to represent, to avoid upsetting the efficiency of the council, the elected member would continue to serve the rest of his term rather than the disruption of either going down one man or having special elections. **Vote Yes**

Issue 12 - The Audit Committee's function is to oversee the internal departments within the county. It is supposed to be both independent and have professional knowledge of the workings of the county in order to properly make evaluations. This amendment changes the consistency of the 5 person team from Fiscal Officer (who was essentially auditing himself), County Executive, County President and two outside appointed members. The proposed makeup would replace the Fiscal Officer and County Executive with one Council Member (in a non-leadership capacity) and one more outside layperson. The President and the other two outside laypeople would remain unchanged. This is designed to (a) keep the council from essentially auditing itself by (b) changing the balance so that there are 3 lay members to only 2 Council Representatives while still (c) maintaining those with knowledge of county workings and both (d) removing the County Executive from the picture altogether and (e) preventing a situation where members have to disagree with their boss and feel their job might be threatened if they were honest. Point (d) is consistent with the original goals of changing to this form of county government. While trying to get away from the former power of the three county commissioners, some had argued that having a single Executive would turn him into some kind of all-powerful Czar. This is one of several moves that spreads the power over the council and to the public. **Vote Yes**

Issue 13 - Every 10 years the County Charter is humble enough to require itself to be reviewed in detail and revised. This avoids outdated laws from staying on the books and allows for current trends to have an opportunity to be reviewed for improvements. A Charter Review Commission is appointed for that purpose, and once approved, they can get to work. All this does is jumpstart the vetting process so as to give adequate time for proper approvals resulting in the entire committee having the full time to convene and decide what, if anything, to present to council to consider amending. This is a minor timing tweak, and a logical one. It is in keeping with similar adjustments voted in on the last ballot for the smoother undisrupted running of government with appropriate time for checks and balances. **Vote Yes.**

Issue 14- This amendment to the County Charter has nothing to do with tinkering with procedural improvements. It is a direct response to issues in the news. It makes it a fundamental right, confirmed by the county that elections should be free and open, and gives the county the right to undertake measures to enforce the point, and promotes voter registration and early voting.

On the surface, everyone agrees with those statements. Who wouldn't agree that everyone who legally can should be able to vote without trouble? That and the fact that this is a hot topic favoring those in the majority in this county is why it will pass overwhelmingly. But it is vague and will lead to consequences that are undesirable and therefore should not pass.

It sets up a situation where the county is de-facto at odds with the state. Currently, the county may not send out early voting applications. As long as the state continues to do so, everyone is happy. Should the state opt to discontinue the practice, it would trigger a situation where the county would be obligated to, which would skew the state results in favor of whatever party is in the majority in our county. Further, it would put us in a situation where we had to put county resources into defending that move. Therefore, the appropriate protection is to make efforts at the state level to lobby for the continuance of the practice of making it easy to vote by mail.

Although this will likely pass due to its broad and popular wording, only through opposition can we protect the equality of every Ohioan. Ohio as a state has walked this journey and come to a good place on these issues. At the county level, it will only skew results. This is the wrong place for this effort. Vote NO