



## MAY 2023 NEWSLETTER

Great news, everyone!!!

I'm pleased to report that Shammass Malik won the Democratic primary and will be the presumptive mayor of Akron. (After defeating 6 other candidates in a primary election May 2 by winning 43% of the vote, he could of course face a write-in candidate in November. but it's unlikely such a candidate could win. There is no Republican candidate running.) This is great news for many reasons and not just for Akron.

Even before his campaign for mayor, Shammass Malik proved himself a thoughtful progressive with the ability to convene, communicate and listen to the community. He's laid out a vision for more citizen involvement in determining Akron's direction and priorities. He's pledged to build an administration that reflects the diversity of the community, in terms of geography, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability and life experience. **However, we're especially pleased that he stands poised to pursue local solutions to climate change, including committing Akron to the Power a Clean Future Ohio campaign.** It was the largest city in Ohio not to have already done so.

This election is also great news because it reaffirms that field work still matters in elections. Malik's campaign estimates it knocked on over 20,000 doors from March to May and **we at Ohio Citizen Action knocked on 10,935 doors ourselves, on his behalf.**



Thanks for your support!

*Rachael L. Belz*  
Rachael L. Belz,  
CEO



We're confident our field work contributed to his decisive margin of victory and look forward to knocking doors for the election of more pro-climate, pro-consumer and/or pro-democracy candidates in municipal elections this fall.

Congratulations, Shammass Malik! We look forward to working with you.

## Thanks for being a member of the Metzenbaum Society

As a current member of Ohio Citizen Action who's made a gift of \$1,000 or more in a 12-month period, you've been automatically enrolled in our highest-level giving circle, the Metzenbaum Society. We created this designation in 2018, to both honor the late Ohio senator - a great ally and tremendous champion on consumer and environmental issues- and develop our relationship with people who have made significant investments in our work like you. You'll receive updates by mail as one of the benefits of membership in the Metzenbaum Society. **This quarterly update is the first in our series for 2023 and will be followed by an update in the fall and our year-in-review report in early 2024.**



Senator Howard M. Metzenbaum

## Metzenbaum Society Benefits

- Personal updates from the CEO and/or Deputy Director
- A pair of complimentary tickets to our anniversary events
- Invitations to lobby days, activist training or other events
- A copy of our annual year-in-review report
- A commemorative pin



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# Legislative Update

As predicted, legislators reintroduced a resolution to make it harder to pass citizen-led ballot initiatives by requiring 60% voter approval instead of a simple majority, after failing to pass the measure in lame duck last year. **Senate Joint Resolution 2 (SJR2)** went even further than its counterpart last year, also requiring qualifying signatures from all 88 counties to get an issue on the ballot, instead of 44, and eliminating the 10-day cure period to replace invalid signatures.



*OCA staff circled in red at the HJR1 protest May 3, 2023*

As we did late last year, Ohio Citizen Action joined more than 240 other organizations to oppose the bill, including joining rallies May 3 and May 10, when hundreds of people marched around the Statehouse and convened in the rotunda to raise their voices in protest of this attack on voter rights.

**We want to thank the 1,477 people who called their lawmakers and 5,710 people who sent digital letters opposing the resolution since January. There were many twists and turns on the way through the legislature and while we're disappointed the measure passed, we are fired up and ready to turn out Ohioans to vote NO on August 8!**

**VOTE NO**  
ON **AUGUST 8<sup>TH</sup>**

**PROTECT ONE PERSON ONE VOTE**

## Power a Clean Future Ohio Update

So far this year, two communities have joined PCFO, pledging to develop carbon reduction plans and implement them in ways that are achievable, measurable, equitable and economical. PCFO will be working with member communities to leverage Inflation Reduction Act money and other

federal funds to accomplish each community's climate change mitigation goals. **We welcome Geneva and Oxford to the PCFO community**, wish them continued success and look forward to more collaboration on local solutions to climate change. **Could your town be next?**



City of  
**Oxford** OHIO  
**HOME OF MIAMI UNIVERSITY**

For more information visit <https://www.poweracleanfuture.org/>



# Organizational Update

**At the Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund board meeting on March 23, we welcomed a new board president, Rhonda Barnes-Kloth.** Rhonda replaces Heather Zoller who stepped down to assume new responsibilities at work but will remain on the board. In addition to her eminent qualification to serve, Rhonda brings enormous love for her home state and deep knowledge of the organization from her previous board service from 2004-2008. After 15 years of living on the East Coast, Rhonda is excited to move back to Cincinnati and re-engage in local and statewide issues. She agreed to rejoin the board because "I respect and admire the organization's results-driven approach to the relentless pursuit of protecting public health, the environment, and democracy."



She currently serves as Vice President, Development- Individual giving for World Wildlife Fund and intends to use her professional expertise in strategic planning, nonprofit management, and fundraising to contribute to the organization's goals and mission. Welcome back, Rhonda!

**We are still seeking board members for both the Ohio Citizen Action and Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund boards, especially from northeast, northwest and southeast Ohio. If you'd consider serving, contact Melissa at [menglish@ohiocitizen.org](mailto:menglish@ohiocitizen.org).**



In March, Ohio Citizen Action Education Fund received an extremely generous grant from the **Puffin West Foundation**, which notified us that their board had decided to dissolve the foundation at the end of 2023. Since 2010 Puffin Foundation West has awarded millions of dollars to grassroots groups and artists working to save species and habitat, amplify the voices of oppressed and marginalized people and enlighten people through the power of art. OCAEF has been a grant recipient since 2013. We are deeply grateful for the generosity and flexibility of the people behind Puffin Foundation West and will miss the collegiality and collaborative nature of our long association. – Thank you!

On April 20, we held our first in-person, post-pandemic event, an Earth Day open house happy hour at our head office in Cleveland. The idea was to celebrate Earth Day and convene staff, members, and supporters informally to talk about our progress and plans for 2023.

Metzenbaum Society members Bill and Pat Hanavan and Sue Wolpert and Ray Lesser attended, as did honored alumni like former Cleveland Field Canvass Director Mark Leddy and former field canvasser Mike Fiala, who regaled us with stories of OCA's very first campaign to prevent precipitous factory closings.

**The event was so much fun, plans are already afoot to replicate it annually in each of our offices every Thursday before Earth Day. See you in 2024!**



*Sue Wolpert and Ray Lesser*



## Organizational Update continued

In early May, we finally reopened our Columbus Field office, after a 12-year hiatus. We were ready to resume our presence in the state capitol back in early 2020, but were set back by the pandemic, so this grand re-opening is especially satisfying. **New Field Canvass Director, Angie Greer, comes to us from Clean Water Action in East Lansing, where she's run a successful field operation for the last two years.**

– Welcome, Angie!



*L-R Angie Greer, Justin Gray-Beeson and Tatiana Rodzos at the May 3 SJR2 rally in Columbus.*



*Our new Columbus home at 4400 N. High St. Ste 312/313 in Clintonville.*

We anticipate the Columbus office to increase field capacity by about 25% this year and look forward to resuming door-to-door contact throughout central, southeast and southwest Ohio from this centralized location. Speaking of location, our building at 4400 N. High St. in Clintonville is especially appropriate for us. The owners have prioritized the climate, enacting improvements like LED lighting and recommissioned mechanical systems that eliminate 558 metric tons of CO2 emissions annually.

Also in May, we proudly began our transition to electric vehicles with the purchase of a 2014 Toyota Prius V hybrid. For decades, we've balanced the need for safety with the need to efficiently transport as many canvassers as possible to the field. To do this, we sacrificed fuel efficiency. However, as we rethink, redesign, and expand our field capacity, we judged it time to begin this inevitable transition. Hybrid vehicles not only save money on gas, they also require less maintenance and are easier for our 20-something staff to drive than the behemoth Suburbans they'll replace. Hopefully, as federal Inflation Reduction Act money facilitates improved EV charging infrastructure, we'll be able to add plug-in vehicles to our fleet as well.



*Columbus Field Canvass Director Angie Greer and canvasser Direye Ahmed with our new EV. Coming soon to a neighborhood near you!*