

Gateway Green Alliance/Green Party of St. Louis

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Press Conference: Greens Petition to Audit City

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GREENS PETITION TO AUDIT CITY

December 2, 2006. St. Louis, Missouri. The Green Party will kick off efforts for an audit of the City of St. Louis during a press conference at ...

11:00 a.m., Saturday, December 2, 2006

Black Bear Bakery

2639 Cherokee (near Texas), St. Louis MO 63118

The petition requests that the State Auditor “conduct an audit of the most recent fiscal year.” Missouri law (Section 29.230 RSMo) specifies that petitions must be signed by 5% of the number of City residents who voted in the most recent governor’s race. That means that about 7,200 registered voters in the City must sign for an audit to occur.

“Our main interest is in finding out where millions of dollars for lead poisoning prevention are being spent,” says Madeline Coburn, Secretary of the Green Party of St. Louis. “We’ve tried throughout the year to find out about lead poisoning finances and City officials just will not tell us which neighborhoods are receiving the money. Greens have gone to City meetings. And City officials have attended our meetings. They have been e-mailed and sent over two dozen letters requesting information. An audit by the State is clearly necessary when the City still will not say where it spends public money.”

What concerns Greens the most is whether neighborhoods with the highest rates of childhood lead poisoning receive the most money to remove lead from homes. The City reports rates of childhood lead poisoning by neighborhood, ward and zip code. But it has told Greens that it does not keep records of spending the same way. “We want to know if lead dollars are really being spent to prevent kids from being poisoned,” insists Coburn. “Or is the money being used for something else?”

“It’s also about financial accountability,” adds Willie Marshall, Chair of the Green Party Central Committee. “The last time the State Auditor looked at City finances was 20 years ago, when Vince Schoemehl was Mayor.”

After the 1986 petitioning campaign, an audit discovered over \$9 million in errors. They included:

- * \$1.7 million which Lambert International Airport could have saved if it had adequately monitored a lease agreement.
- * \$6 million that the License Collector’s Office failed to collect.
- * \$250,000 that the Parking Meter Division spent without justifying the need for a parking lot.

“The audit should cost the City about \$750,000 to \$1 million,” says Marshall, who was the Green Party candidate for Mayor in 2005. “But it actually will help the City save money. Based on the last audit, the City should save at least \$5 to \$10 million each year. The City will be a lot more careful with our money if they know someone is watching how they spend it. A full audit is long overdue.”

Those interested in helping with petitioning efforts should call 314-727-8554.