

Ohio Citizen Action and the First Amendment

The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled against mandatory disclosure of membership lists of groups exercising their First Amendment associational rights.

In *NAACP v. Alabama* (1958), *Shelton v. Tucker* (1960), and *Gibson v. Florida Legislative Investigation Committee* (1963), the High

Court said the free exercise of constitutionally enshrined rights of free speech, expression, and association must be allowed to flourish. A unanimous Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Socialist Workers '74 Campaign Committee* (1982), protected a political organization from any disclosure due to the potential harassment and reprisals which might result to the members' disclosure.

Ohio Citizen Action has won a similar case against the State of Ohio.

In 1987, Ohio House Speaker Vern Riffe added an amendment to the state budget bill which would have required Ohio Citizen Action to turn over its membership list to the state government. Riffe pushed the provision in retaliation for the organization's successful campaign to preserve victims rights in pending tort- reform bills. The organization took the case to federal court, which declared the provision unconstitutional in February, 1988.

