



Julie Roberts, Green Party Candidate for Monroe County Council District 2

[Contact Information](#)

The Issues

THE PROBLEM: OUR AMBULANCE SERVICE, OUR JAIL, AND OUR EMERGENCY DISPATCH CENTER ARE UNDERFUNDED TO THE POINT OF BEING DANGEROUS TO THE PUBLIC.

THE SOLUTION: A \$4 PER MONTH PER PERSON TAX INCREASE (BASED ON THE AVERAGE WAGE EARNED IN MONROE COUNTY).

Three of our major public services are so financially fragile that they may soon break. The Monroe County Jail teeters on the brink of federal lawsuits from overcrowding and understaffing. Bloomington Hospital Ambulance Service is \$770,000 in debt due to changes in Medicare/Medicaid reimbursements. And our emergency medical dispatch center is too short-staffed to provide phone line help to a caller in crisis. The reason these situations exist is due largely to an obscure decision made thirty years ago, a decision which can be remedied.

In 1973, the state froze tax levies for Indiana counties and cities. Before the freeze, the controller for the City of Bloomington made estimates that left the city a comfortable margin of revenue. His counterpart for the county did the opposite, paring estimates to the bare bone. Thirty years later, Monroe County still suffers from his decision. If we do not take immediate action, the suffering could become severe.

Julie Roberts proposes that we reinstate the County Option Income Tax initiative dropped by the Democrats this spring. The proposed increase of .0025 is 1/4 of one penny on every \$100

of taxable income. For the average wage earner in Monroe County, that works out to less than \$4 per month. Isn't it worth \$4 per month to have our ambulance service solvent, our emergency dispatchers capable of talking us through a crisis until an ambulance arrives, and our jail personnel capable of handling the intense overcrowding at our county corrections facility?

Julie Roberts demands a tax increase to:

- **Fully fund the Bloomington Hospital Ambulance Service.**

The ambulance service is \$770,000 in debt. Monroe Co. pays a miniscule \$118,000 subsidy to Bloomington Hospital to run the service. Compare that to \$850,000 paid by Porter Co. for a similar level of service to about the same number of residents. Owen Co. spends \$13 per person on ambulance service. We spend less than one dollar. Unless we can substantially increase this subsidy, the county may find itself having to run the ambulance service by itself, with a yearly operating budget of \$2.8 million. The hospital is under no obligation to provide ambulance service once their contract is up in 2005. They will not continue to take such enormous losses with no hope of recompense. In addition, ambulance personnel are paid insultingly low wages. A new EMT starts at \$8.84/hr. Burger King was recently hiring for \$9/hr. The men and women who fight for our lives in times of crisis deserve more than that. As a community, we should be ashamed of such wages.

- **End dangerous conditions at the Monroe County Jail.**

Because it is unglamorous and politically unfavorable, the County Council chronically underfunds the jail. As a result, it is desperately overcrowded and understaffed. Jailers work at tremendous risk to their own health and well-being. Burn-out and staff turnover are understandably high. To hire enough new jail staff to cover basic safety needs would cost an additional \$450,000 per year, every year. Prisoners are double-bunked in single occupant cells and sleeping on mattresses on the floor in every hallway. Only highly skilled management of the inmate population has avoided major incidents thus far. Sheriff Steve Sharp and jail commander Bill Wilson are to be commended.

However, due to the County Council's financial neglect, the jail is at risk for a federal lawsuit which could end in a consent decree. Delaware Co. entered such a decree in the 1980's and spent \$80 million to comply. Imagine what the would cost Monroe Co. in terms of today's dollars. The time to do something about this problem is NOW before it is taken out of our hands by the federal government.

- **Fully staff the emergency dispatch center.**

If you need medical advice over the phone before an ambulance arrives, too bad--you can't get it here. Monroe County won't pay for enough personnel to cover the phone lines if a dispatcher is tied up helping someone through a medical crisis. We are already one dispatcher short on all three shifts just taking care of regular dispatch. Also, of the 300,000 calls handled by the center last year, only 50,000 of those were 911 calls. We must hire call takers to re-route non-emergency phone traffic so it does not create a burden on emergency personnel. The dispatch center hasn't finished a staffing analysis yet, but by my rough estimates, we need 8 additional dispatchers. Remember, this has to cover three shifts, seven days a week, plus vacations and training time. Cost each year, for personnel and Emergency Medical Dispatch training, about \$240,000.

- **Pay county employees a living wage.**
- **Complete a greenspace inventory of Monroe County.**

Julie Roberts insists that we:

- Halt sprawl by any legal means.
- Stop the flow of money from developers to elected officials.
- Increase fines for environmental offenses.
- Cut off tax dollars that support corporate interests.
- Support nonviolent protest to save greenspace.

Why Vote Green?

- **Success**--Greens hold 110 elected offices, including 5 mayorships.
- **Integrity**--Greens cannot be bought. We refuse all business contributions.
- **Courage**--Greens proudly demand:
 - Universal health care
 - A minimum wage of \$10/hr.
 - Gay rights, including marriage
 - Ending the war on drugs
 - Abolishing the death penalty
 - An honest approach to racism
 - Alternative transportation
 - Saving the world's environment
- **Optimism**--Greens believe that united citizens can remake the United States.

Julie Roberts Announces Candidacy for County Council

BLOOMINGTON. Green Party member Julie Roberts announced her candidacy for Monroe County Council District 2 at the Bloomington City Council meeting Wednesday evening, January 16. The second district seat, currently held by Democrat Joni Reagan, is being contested this coming November.

Roberts, who teaches middle school and high school art, spoke of her deep, long-term commitment to the community and her willingness to address issues largely shunned in local political debate. The issues Roberts mentioned as important in her upcoming campaign include health care, the preservation of green space, a living wage, and working to end corporate domination of the political system.

Citing reactions of those she had spoken with privately regarding her political aspirations, Roberts said "Citizens have already approached me and reproached me for daring to run as a Green, for having the gall to buck the system. They ask, 'How dare you upset the power balance of the county government?' Here's how I dare:

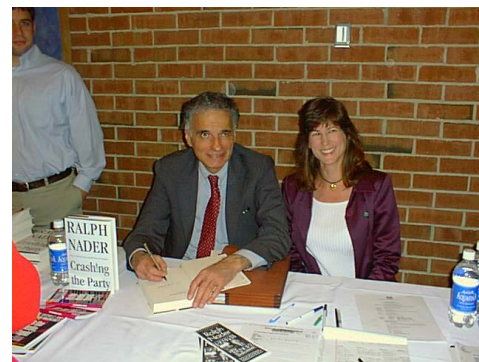
"I am a fifth-generation Monroe county citizen. I'm not in this for the short run; I'm in this for the long haul. I see my children's children's children living, loving, and working in this green, glittering jewel I have always called my home. I intend to see it kept green, and I intend to see it keep glittering."



Julie signs candidacy petition

Roberts also referred to the uphill battle that all third parties face to get their candidates on the ballot, and to obtain enough funding to compete against the two major parties. The Green Party, which does not accept corporate contributions, faces a unique challenge in fundraising. The Greens may not have the same resources, Roberts said, "but what we do have is faith. We have faith in the public, we have faith in our issues, we have faith in door to door and neighbor to neighbor, in word of mouth, and in what's right."

Julie Roberts' campaign committee can be reached at ipiedmon@hotmail.com or by phone at 812/829-2249 (daytime) or 812/333-1129 (evenings).



Julie with Raph Nader

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