

Sign Control News

Newsletter of the Center for Sign Control • A project of the Coalition for Scenic Beauty

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JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, VOTERS ADOPT BILLBOARD BAN

On May 27, voters in Jacksonville, Florida, approved a ballot referendum which bans all new billboards and requires the city to tear down all existing billboards along city streets. This is the fourth voter referendum to ban billboards in the U.S. in the past three years.

Last November, voters in Anchorage, Alaska, voted to continue that city's historic prohibition of billboards. In November 1985, voters in Tucson, Arizona banned billboards along most city streets. In 1984, voters in Beaufort County, South Carolina voted to abolish all billboards throughout the county. There is now an effort underway in Los Angeles to put a referendum banning billboards before voters in 1988.

The push for a voter referendum to stop billboard proliferation in Florida's largest city began last fall after the Jacksonville City Council narrowly rejected a proposed ordinance that would have curtailed billboard construction in the city. (In connection with the Council's action, one



Black neighborhood in Southern California blighted with cigarette and alcohol billboards.

"...The victory in Jacksonville shows that the voter referendum can be a valuable tool in many communities where citizens are frustrated in their efforts to persuade politicians to stop billboard blight."

city council member, Don Gaffney, was later indicted for allegedly soliciting a bribe from the plant manager of Naegele Outdoor a week after the vote. Gaffney is now awaiting trial.)

The referendum was placed on the ballot after a Jacksonville organization, Citizens Against the Proliferation of Signs (CAPSIGNS), collected over 17,000 signatures in one week. Unofficial returns show that 61,954 (59%) voted for the total ban while 43,477 (41%) voted against. CAPSIGNS felt that a city charter amendment was their only option after the Jacksonville City Council voted against meaningful billboard controls.

The referendum will ban all billboard construction after June 1, 1987. All billboards along city streets will have to come down by June 1, 1992. Billboards along federal aid highways will be unaffected.

Another winner in the Jacksonville election was Tommy

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INDUSTRY TARGETS MINORITY NEIGHBORHOODS WITH BILLBOARDS

"Drive through Black or Hispanic neighborhoods in many cities and you're likely to see big billboards right next to homes and churches and across the street from schools and parks—most of them advertising cigarettes and booze."

—Carl Rowan (3/27/87 editorial)

According to several recent reports, low-income neighborhoods—primarily Black and Hispanic—are being saturated with billboards. The rapid spread of new billboards targeted at minorities has no parallel in white or upper-income neighborhoods. In many residential areas, these billboards can be seen on the sides of buildings, next to elementary schools, youth centers, playgrounds, even in the frontyard of homes.

In April 1986 the Eight Sheet Outdoor Advertising Association reported that 90% of national brand advertising in 1985 was targeted at ethnic neighborhoods. The report indicates that of \$15.5 million spent on national brand advertising, tobacco and liquor advertising accounted for \$12 million and beer and soft drinks for \$1.7 million.

In another report the Out-of-Home Measurement Bureau, a billboard auditing firm, found 7,540 new "junior" billboards directed at Blacks and 4,926 junior billboards directed at Hispanics (*Signs of the Times*, October 1986).

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INDUSTRY TARGETS MINORITY NEIGHBORHOODS

(Continued from front page)

Advertising Age (11/19/84) found that the majority of advertising targeted to Blacks was for alcohol and tobacco. Hair care products came in third place. Most billboards littering Hispanic neighborhoods also display tobacco and alcohol advertising.

For example, a recent study by the San Francisco Planning Department found that 62% of all billboards in a Black neighborhood advertised cigarettes and liquor while city-wide in San Francisco the figure was only 31%.

In commenting on these statistics, former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan of Texas stated, "Black communities don't need the plethora of billboards extolling the virtues of alcohol (*Washington Post*, May 17, 1987).

George Hacker of the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) warns that the alcohol industry's targeting of groups such as Blacks poses a danger to the health of the targeted community.

"One of the major causes of concern for us is that the same people that are targeted by alcohol ads on billboards are those that are suffering the most alcohol related health problems," said Hacker.

A report released this May by Hacker's group entitled *Marketing Booze to Blacks*, criticizes both billboards and the alcoholic beverage industry for targeting Blacks. "Liquor producers apparently think that urban billboards provide a direct hit on the Black market," the report says. "Saturation-type advertising of the kind directed to Blacks is relatively rare in predominantly white neighborhoods. [Billboards] and other marketing techniques constitute a commanding presence by the alcohol industry in the Black community."

Already, some communities are moving to stop billboard proliferation, especially the heavy advertising of tobacco and alcohol products in their neighborhoods. □

For a copy of *Marketing Booze to Blacks*, contact the Washington, D.C. based Center for Science in the Public Interest at (202) 332-9110.



Front yard cigarette billboard in Hispanic neighborhood. Tobacco and alcohol ads are found on a majority of billboards in minority neighborhoods.

Jacksonville Billboard Ban

(Continued from front page)

Hazouri, the Democratic Mayoral candidate who supported the billboard ban and refused to use billboards in his campaign. The Mayor-elect, in his acceptance speech, said that he will enforce the new billboard control law.

Hazouri said, "I think that with the billboard ban charter amendment passing...and with my victory here tonight, I think it's a statement from the people of Jacksonville, for all 700,000 citizens of this community, about what they want for the future of Jacksonville, and that future is progress with pride."

Bill Gassett, a leader of CAPSIGNS, echoed Hazouri, saying that the organization "is quite happy with the results."

"Jacksonville voters are the latest to join the growing national movement to clean up billboard blight," said Edward McMahon, Executive Director of the Coalition for Scenic Beauty. "The billboard industry has successfully lobbied many politicians to ignore billboard pollution, but they cannot fool the voters who see billboard proliferation as a threat to the quality of life."

"The victory in Jacksonville shows that the voter referendum can be a valuable tool in many communities where citizens are frustrated in their efforts to persuade politicians to stop billboard blight."

"The Jacksonville referendum also demonstrates that the limits of public tolerance are growing thin. Unless the industry curbs its excesses, the backlash against billboards will continue to grow." □

SIGN CONTROL NEWS is a publication of the Coalition for Scenic Beauty. It is available free to Coalition members. If you want to help save our scenery and work for meaningful controls on visual blight, you can join the Coalition. Membership fees are \$20 a year; for local clubs, associations, organizations, private businesses, or government agencies, annual dues are \$50; for state or regional organizations, \$100; for national organizations, \$150. To join, send check payable to the "Coalition for Scenic Beauty" to: Coalition for Scenic Beauty, 44 East Front Street, Media, PA 19063.

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Editor, *Sign Control News* David Michaud

COLORADO ENACTS STATEWIDE LOGO SIGN SYSTEM

Colorado Governor Richard Lamm has signed legislation which establishes a logo sign system along all rural Colorado interstates. The legislation, authored by State Representative Dan Williams, was signed in March.

"The logo sign system will enhance awareness by the traveling public of roadside businesses in an aesthetically pleasing manner," said Williams. The implementation of a statewide logo sign system is an "economic awareness issue, says Williams, pointing out that logo signs discourage billboard proliferation.

The new state law directs the Colorado Highway Department to formulate regulations to carry out the logo sign program. Colorado Highway Beautification Administrator

Tom Einboden said that the regulations should be ready by July and construction of logo signs could begin as early as this fall.

Thirty states now have logo sign systems. In these states roadside businesses have found logo signs much less expensive and more helpful to their businesses than billboards. A typical billboard costs \$500 to \$2,000 a month to rent versus an average \$200 to \$500 a year to advertise on a logo sign. Local businesses appear to benefit just as much as national franchises. □

For more information about the Colorado Logo System, contact Tom Einboden at (303) 757-9334.

NEW HANOVER COUNTY, NC, LIMITS BILLBOARD CONSTRUCTION

On May 5, the New Hanover County, North Carolina Commissioners put the brakes on the billboard industry by approving, on a 4-0-1 vote, an ordinance that prohibits new billboards except in industrial zoned areas.

New Hanover County includes the city of Wilmington and the southern North Carolina beaches.

Billboard control activists, led by Wilmington businessman Peter Davis, were delighted. "We're a historic area, we have beautiful beaches, and very pristine countryside," said Davis. "We've been overrun by sorry development where short term profits are a priority rather than long term benefits. This ordinance is a message that the county cares about its appearance."

The new ordinance restricts billboards to industrial zones, increases spacing from 500 to 1,000 feet, sets a 30-foot maximum height, and downsizes billboards to 150 square feet along highways and 75 square feet elsewhere.

The new ordinance also establishes a setback of at least 400 feet from residential zones, churches, and other sensitive areas.

Under the previous ordinance, billboards could be erected anywhere except on residential lots.

In opposing the new ordinance, the billboard industry paid for numerous full page ads in the *Wilmington Star*, used billboards to urge defeat of the law, held luncheons for billboard users and landowners and heavily lobbied the commissioners.

At the final hearing however, about 200 pro-billboard control residents appeared on behalf of the ordinance while about 30 billboard employees and supporters spoke against the ordinance.

Later this year, the city of Wilmington will decide whether to tighten its own billboard control ordinance. □

PITTSBURGH BILLBOARDS STAY DOWN, SCENIC VISTAS PRESERVED

Three neighborhood associations in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania have reached an agreement with Patrick Media not to reconstruct six billboards which would have obstructed the view of several city neighborhoods.

In 1984, the city quietly entered into an agreement with Patrick Media to allow the reconstruction of billboards which had to be removed so that the city could rebuild the Bloomfield Bridge. When the billboards were removed, the view from the bridge was so improved that neighborhood

groups opposed reconstruction of the billboards.

The neighborhood groups were threatening legal action to keep the billboards down when Patrick Media agreed not to re-erect the billboards.

Meanwhile, billboard companies operating in Pittsburgh have voluntarily agreed to stop applying for billboard permits while a city committee looks into changes in Pittsburgh's billboard ordinance. □

GREENSBORO, NC PASSES STRICTER BILLBOARD CONTROLS

On March 16, the Greensboro, North Carolina City Council passed a billboard control ordinance that prohibits new billboards within a 1½-mile radius of the central business district and along designated "scenic corridors."

The council also limited the size of new billboards to 450 square feet (down from 772 square feet under the old ordinance), increased the spacing requirement to 500 feet on city streets, and lengthened the residential setback from 100 to 300 feet. □

GUILFORD COUNTY, NC PASSES NEW ORDINANCE

On January 19, Guilford County, which encompasses Greensboro, North Carolina, passed its own billboard control reforms. The County Board of Commissioners voted to prohibit new billboards along eight major highways in the county.

The Commissioners named the highways "scenic corridors" meaning that new billboards will be banned within 1,500 feet on either side of the highway. The move was designed to beautify the main approaches into the city of Greensboro. □

HIGH COURT THROWS OUT SUIT AGAINST BEAUFORT CO., SC

The South Carolina Supreme Court on April 14 threw out a lawsuit by Peterson Outdoor Advertising, which charged that Beaufort County's billboard ban was unconstitutional. The Court said that the suit was meaningless since Beaufort County had modified its ordinance since the suit was first filed (*Peterson Outdoor vs. Beaufort County*, 354 Southeastern 2nd 563).

In 1984, voters in Beaufort County endorsed a total ban on all billboards in a ballot referendum. The subsequent ordinance banned *all* billboards but in 1986 the County Council modified the ordinance to allow political, non-commercial signs.

The high court's decision does not end the billboard company's litigation against Beaufort County because it did not address the County's amortization provision or the total ban on commercial billboards. □

MOBILE, ALABAMA TIGHTENS BILLBOARD CONTROLS

On December 23, 1986, the Mobile City Council voted to end local billboard proliferation. While a tougher ordinance was supported by a broad array of groups including the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, the new law does place a cap on existing billboards, creates billboard-free zones throughout the city, increases the setback from residential areas to 300 feet and imposes new height, size and spacing requirements. Perhaps the best feature of the new ordinance is the requirement that all billboards be removed from the city's numerous historic districts. □

DENVER CONSIDERS BILLBOARD MORATORIUM

A proposal to enact a six-month moratorium on billboard construction goes before the Denver City Council for a second reading and a public hearing on Tuesday, May 26. The moratorium was introduced by the City Council asking the Denver Planning Department to review the city's existing billboard control law.

Since the moratorium's first reading in late April, the Denver Zoning Administration has reportedly stopped issuing billboard permits while the moratorium legislation is pending.

Colorado billboard control activists may wish to attend the City Council's May 26th hearing. □

KENNER, LA DOWNSIZES INTERSTATE BILLBOARDS

The town of Kenner, Louisiana, responding to a deluge of permit applications, has placed new restrictions on the erection of billboards in the town.

According to City Planner Donald Terranova, the billboard industry wanted to erect giant monpoles along Interstate 10 and along canal rights of way in this bayou area. To halt the proliferation, the Kenner City Council on April 4 enacted an ordinance which limits billboards to a maximum of 400 square feet in commercial and industrial areas and prohibits their erection within 100 feet of residential zones and along canal rights of way. Billboards were limited to 35 feet in height and must be spaced at least 650 feet apart.

Billboard companies which want to erect signs larger than 400 square feet along the interstate must get the approval of the Planning Department, the City Council, and the State.

Donald Terranova sees this ordinance as an improvement over previous controls which allowed billboards virtually anywhere in Kenner. □

SPARTANBURG, SC TIGHTENS SIGN ORDINANCE

The Spartanburg County, South Carolina Council gave final approval April 8 to a new sign ordinance that restricts billboards to numbered highways and secondary roads. It also establishes a spacing requirement of at least 1,000 feet, sets a maximum size of 378 square feet and a maximum height of 35 feet.

Any companies which erect illegal billboards will be subject to fines up to \$200 or up to 30 days in jail for each day of the violation.

The ordinance resulted from concern over the proliferation of billboards spawned by a tree-cutting incident in front of a Spartanburg billboard in the summer of 1986. □

BILLBOARD CONTROL

What Is Going On Around The Country

All across America the issue of billboards has been and is currently being debated. Below are brief summaries of what is happening in some areas.

Jacksonville, Florida

In May 1987 voters in Jacksonville, Florida overwhelmingly endorsed a ballot referendum which bans all new billboards and requires that all existing billboards on city streets be removed within five years.

Virginia Beach, Virginia

The Virginia Beach City Council voted in February 1987 to ban all new billboards and to prohibit existing billboards from being repaired, replaced, or renewed.

Houston, Texas

Houston officials have passed an ordinance that prohibits any new billboards from being erected in the city. Scenic corridors and districts have been established in which existing signs must be removed through amortization.

Raleigh, North Carolina

In 1984, Raleigh passed a temporary moratorium on all billboard permits while revising its sign regulations. Last year, it adopted strict regulations that ban new billboards in all but heavy industrial zones. The maximum size for billboards is 150 square feet on four lane roads, and 75 square feet elsewhere. Furthermore, the amortization provision in Raleigh's ordinance which requires all non-conforming signs to be removed within 5½ years has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Tucson, Arizona

In April 1985 Tucson adopted a temporary moratorium on all billboard permits while revising its ordinance. In September 1985 the City Council adopted an ordinance which banned new billboards larger than 72 square feet and prohibited them completely in historic districts, along scenic streets, gateway roads, airport approaches, certain business districts and numerous other locations. Voters later endorsed the ban on new billboards by a 2-to-1 margin in city referendum.

Charleston, South Carolina

A temporary moratorium was in effect until new regulations were drafted. A 1986 city ordinance prohibits any new billboards from being erected, except in areas zoned "heavy industrial." All non-conforming billboards must be removed within 15 years.

Phoenix, Arizona

In 1986, the Phoenix City Council passed legislation that prohibits new billboards from being erected in any business zone and along most freeways in the city. The same ordinance further limits size and spacing.

Chattanooga, Tennessee

The Chattanooga City Council adopted an ordinance in 1986 that requires one existing billboard to be removed for every one that goes up. Scenic corridors were also designated that are "billboard free." In addition, size limitations were significantly increased.

Little Rock, Arkansas

A temporary moratorium was imposed by the Little Rock City Council in the early 1980s. Subsequently, an ordinance prohibiting the construction of new billboards was adopted.

San Antonio, Texas

San Antonio has established billboard-free zones throughout the city. If a new billboard is erected on a legal site, two existing billboards must be removed.

Fort Worth, Texas

Fort Worth passed legislation in 1984 to prohibit the construction of any new billboards.

Austin, Texas

Austin passed legislation in 1984 to prohibit the construction of any new billboards

Durham, North Carolina

Durham recently adopted an ordinance very similar to Raleigh's (see above).

Marin County, Calif.; Pitkin County, Colo.; Montgomery County, Md.; Fairfax County, Va.; and Morris County, N.J.

These fast-growing counties totally ban all billboards.

Martha's Vineyard, Mass.; Palm Springs, Calif.; Scottsdale, Ariz.; Boca Raton, Fla.; Williamsburg, Va.; and Santa Fe, N.M.

These well-known resorts totally ban all billboards.

Nags Head, Chapel Hill, and Southern Pines, North Carolina

Billboards have been totally banned from these communities

States of Vermont, Maine, Hawaii and Alaska

All billboards have been eliminated from the roadsides of these states.

State of Connecticut

Billboards are prohibited in 117 cities and towns in Connecticut. This includes communities such as Bridgewater, Canaan, Danbury, Darien, Greenwich, Norwalk and West Hartford.

State of Massachusetts

Billboards are prohibited in 178 cities and towns in Massachusetts. This includes communities such as Amherst, Brookline, Deerfield, Lexington, Provincetown, Sturbridge and Wellesley.

State of Virginia

Billboards are prohibited in numerous cities and counties in Virginia. Cities which ban billboards include Alexandria, Charlottesville, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Leesburg, Newport News and Winchester. Counties which ban billboards include Arlington, Clarke, Fairfax, Isle of Wight, Loudoun, and Prince William.

State of California

Billboards are prohibited in over 100 cities and counties in California. In addition, the state prohibits billboards along landscaped freeways and has a scenic highways program.

THE COALITION FOR SCENIC BEAUTY NEEDS YOUR HELP IN OUR FIGHT TO SAVE OUR SCENERY.

We are now working with cities and towns all over America, helping them halt the spread of billboard blight. We are also preparing for a renewed federal legislative fight. Please sit down right now and write out a check for \$30 or more to help us fight the ugliness lobby.

Please join us in helping to stop the ruthless destruction of our scenic heritage.

Please send \$20, \$30, \$50, \$100 or whatever you can give today.

Send to:

COALITION FOR SCENIC BEAUTY

218 D Street, SE, Washington, D.C. 20003

YES! I want to help Save Our Scenery. Enclosed is my check for \$_____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

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