

# The Vindicator

WEDNESDAY

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May 6, 2009

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The Valley's Homepage

## Voters deny Party Pantry a license to sell beer, wine and mixed drinks

*Mahoning County voters approved every tax issue but one.*

By DAVID SKOLNICK  
VINDICATOR POLITICS WRITER

YOUNGSTOWN — Voters living near the Party Pantry on Glenwood Avenue voted to no longer permit the store to sell beer, wine and mixed beverages.

That's going to kill business at the corner store, said Zuhair Sarsour, who co-owns the Party Pantry with his wife, Ahlam.

"Without beer, there's no point having the store open," he said, though adding that he wouldn't close the store. "The beer is the heart of the store. Even with beer, we can't pay our house bills. Without beer, I bet you they're going to kick us out of our house."

In November 2008, voters in Youngstown's 5th Ward, Precinct I, voted to make the precinct dry.

The store, owned for 18 years by the Sarsours, had to receive approval Tuesday for a liquor option to keep its liquor license.

Though only 136 people in the precinct voted Tuesday on the issue, only 30 cast ballots in favor of allowing the store to sell liquor.

Neighbors have complained about the Party Pantry, on the corner of Canfield Road, and other corner stores, claiming they are places where people congregate and commit illegal activities.

Mayor Jay Williams praised the citizens in that precinct for "sending a strong message that they want to clean up their neighborhoods."

The mayor said the vote was a "victory and I hope it sets the template for other neighborhoods in the city. Stores that are productive in neighborhoods are welcome, and not those that detract from the neighborhood."

Williams pointed out that Sarsour said his business survives on the sale of alcohol and questions how that improves the quality of

life in that neighborhood.

"This vote tells other stores to clean up your act, or you'll be subject to the same type of effort," he said. "It sends a strong, strong message."

In Mahoning County, every tax issue — except a 4.6-mill levy for the Western Reserve school system — passed. The Western Reserve levy failed by only 16 votes.

Also, voters in Boardman approved allowing township officials to negotiate the purchase of natural gas and electricity in bulk through aggregation programs. Voters in Struthers approved an electric aggregation proposal.

Turnout in the county was atrocious, as only 10.8 percent of eligible voters cast ballots.

"I never ever would have expected turnout to be that dismal," said Thomas McCabe, the county election board director. "This could be the lowest turnout ever in the county."

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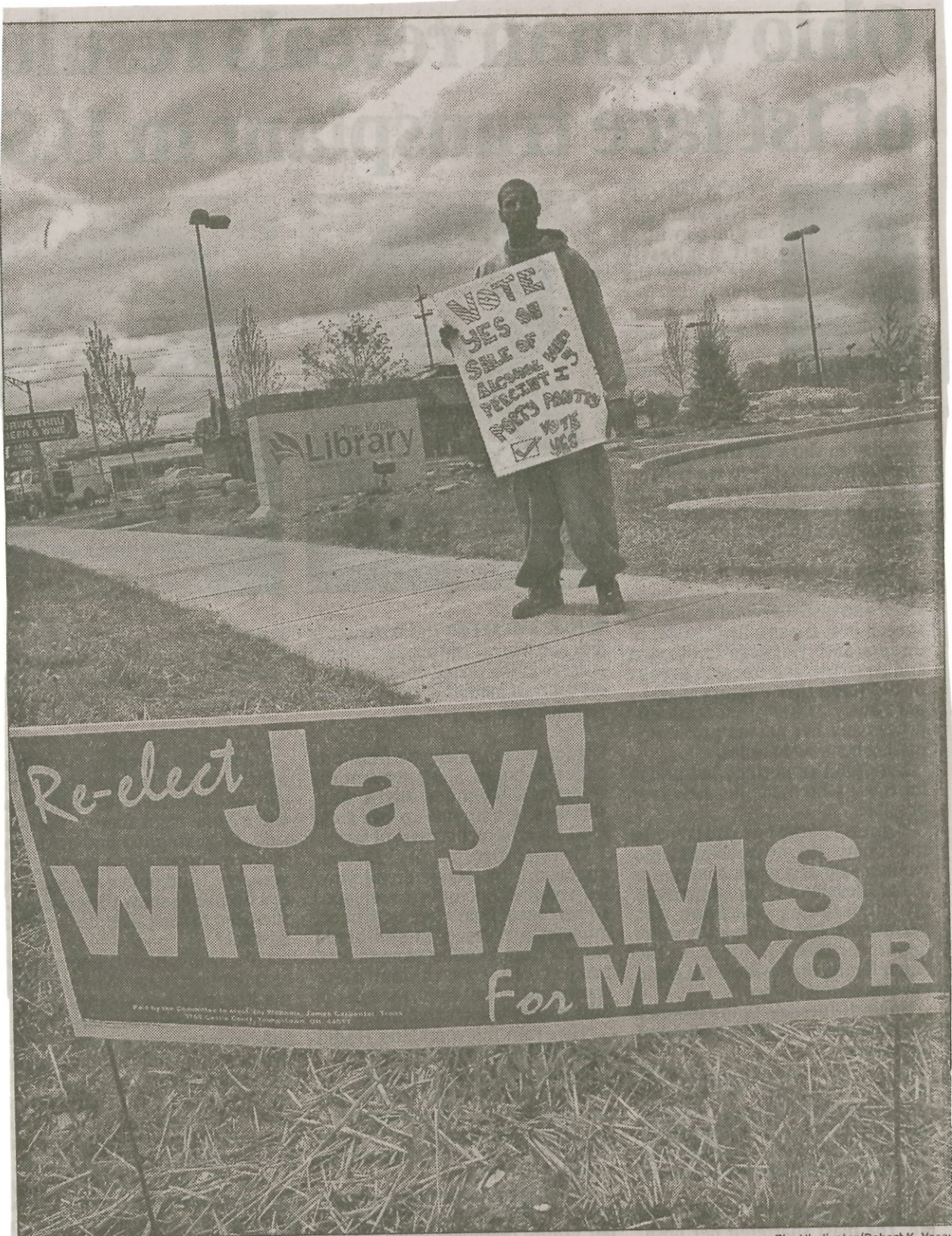


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SECTION B



The Vindicator/Robert K. Yosay

**SIGN OF THE TIMES:** Zaher Sarsour of Youngstown was out to persuade voters to approve a liquor permit for the Party Pantry on the city's South Side. Signs to re-elect Mayor Jay Williams also were scattered throughout the city. Voters denied the liquor permit, and Williams easily won the Democratic Party mayoral primary in Tuesday's election.