

League of Women Voters of Wyoming July 2018

Pro/Con Statements about the Specific Purpose Excise Tax Proposition

For more information see the website: <https://www.cityoflaramie.org/998/Pennies-Build-Community> . League members gathered the statements below from supporters and opponents of this tax measure.



Pro (for the proposition)

1. The tax is not new. Our tax rate will not increase; it will remain at 6 %. It is a renewal of an existing tax voted on in 2010, which is estimated to end in December 2018. As early as 2001 voters in Albany County have approved it for various specific projects.
2. When \$65.5 million is collected, the tax expires. This is estimated to be 10-12 years from the date the tax goes into effect.
3. The tax must be used **only** for specific purposes in Laramie, Rock River and Albany County. See the list on a website the city has prepared given above.
4. The vote is a simple “for” or “against” on the list of projects. We support all projects or none.
5. Annual audits are public record; the projects are very visible, so governments can be held accountable if work is not done; future elected officials cannot change the projects.
6. Most of the projects are infrastructure improvements that cannot be funded any other way, though our local governments have applied for federal grants where possible. Nearly every community has the same difficulty in setting aside funds from existing revenues for infrastructure upgrades. Example: 11.4% of the tax would go to various park, trail and recreation projects, delayed because user fees and city budget can't cover the costs.
7. Tourists also pay the tax; estimates are that visitors paid 17% of all sales taxes collected in Albany County last year. They use our streets, sewers, water supply and airport too.
8. Sales tax in Ft. Collins is currently higher, at 7.4%. In Cheyenne it is currently 6%, as is Albany County's if this measure passes.
9. This tax will not be collected on food for home consumption, prescription drugs, medical devices or services. It will be collected on Internet sales.
10. Laramie Regional Airport will receive 11% of this tax for terminal expansion needed to accommodate expanded service with 50-70 seat airplanes. User fees would make air service very expensive. Federal grants are scarce and very competitive—all US airports have similar issues.
11. There is some flexibility in a few of the specific proposals, especially regarding Laramie streets expenditures that would allow for dealing with emergency situations.

Con (against the proposition)

1. If voted down, the county sales and use tax will be reduced by 1 % when the existing Special Purpose Excise Tax, approved in 2010, reaches its goal.
2. 4 % of the exiting sales and use tax goes to state government, not Albany County. Voters have already approved an optional 1% tax added to the 4%, to stay in Albany County, and will be asked to renew that tax again in the 2018 General Election.
3. Voters cannot pick and choose among the projects listed; they must either vote to support all, or to reject all.
4. Once voted in, it will be hard, if not impossible, to repeal it in the future until the time comes for renewal for different projects, if any are proposed then.
5. City and County governments change personnel. New people may want to spend the money on items other than those covered by this specific tax.
6. We should adopt a pay-as-you-go approach to infrastructure improvements; if we don't have the funds, don't do the projects. Wait until the economy improves and local revenues increase from the current sales tax.
7. It isn't fair to tax visitors to our county who don't benefit from things like a fire training facility.
8. Without the tax, there would be even more incentive for Ft. Collins or Cheyenne shoppers to come to Laramie, increasing our revenue, maybe less incentive for local residents to shop elsewhere.
9. Sales taxes are regressive—people who have less income pay at the same rate as those who have lots of income. Corporate taxes and income taxes are a less regressive way to fund governments.
10. Air passengers should pay for airport terminal expansion—they can afford it.
11. There ought to be money set aside for emergencies from the regular governmental budgets. We should accrue funds for infrastructure improvements so we don't get into debt.

The League is a nonpartisan organization that does not support candidates or political parties but may take a stand on issues members have reached consensus upon. The League does not have a position on this ballot issue, though it does generally support increasing city and county revenues.