

The



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"IF I WERE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A NEWSPAPER OR A NEWSPAPER WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT, I WOULD NOT HESITATE TO CHOOSE THE LATTER." THOMAS JEFFERSON

75 cents
October 12, 2016

Letters to the Editor

Deadline for letters is noon on Monday. Please include a phone number for verification, and submit letters electronically.

All letters are printed as received. Grammatical and spelling errors are the responsibility of the author.

Say no to proposed beverage tax

Dear Editor,

Cook County is facing a massive budget deficit again this year. To generate revenue, commissioners are once again considering new taxes. Unfortunately, Cook County families and businesses already pay more taxes within the State and County while reaping less benefits and services. We pay the highest sales tax in the nation and many of us face record-

breaking property tax increases as well.

The Cook County Board of Commissioners proposed a regressive beverage tax, a new, penny-per-ounce tax on common beverages families purchase in the grocery store like sports drinks, teas, lemonades, sodas, and juice drinks. In response, hundreds of beverage industry employees, business organizations, small business

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owners and concerned residents rallied at the Cook County building last week in opposition. A \$.01 per ounce tax would increase the cost of a \$.99 2-liter bottle by \$.68, a nearly 70 percent increase. A 12-pack would be increased in cost by \$1.44. The Rolling Meadows Chamber of Commerce continues to support the non-alcoholic beverage industry along with more

than a thousand other small businesses and chambers of commerce in Cook County.

Time and time again we have heard from our members that an additional tax on beverages would be devastating to our grocery/convenience stores, restaurants, and residents of Cook County.

With nearly 90,000 jobs in restaurants, grocery stores, convenience stores, entertainment venues and more, many hard working people rely on these industries - all of which could be hurt by a proposed beverage tax.

There is a limit to what struggling fami-

lies can afford. Many of the industry type businesses will also receive the brunt of this tax making it even more difficult to remain competitive with other neighboring counties. We certainly don't need to add a new tax that will raise our grocery bills and restaurant prices.

Join the efforts to oppose a tax that could increase the cost of common grocery items by as much as 70 percent and put

our restaurants at a major competitive disadvantage. Our commissioners need to hear from the families and individual business owners/employees that live in their districts. Visit NoCookCountyBeverageTax.com to make your voice heard today.

Linda Liles Ballantine
Executive Director
Rolling Meadows Chamber of Commerce

Surge: Board expected to vote on soda tax in mid-November

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property taxes, water fees and the county's own sales tax hike last year shouldn't be subject to a new "grocery tax."

"Now is not the time for Illinois families to endure a tax on their groceries," said Illinois Beverage Association Acting Executive Director Claudia Rodriguez. "Enough is enough."

Last month, the American Beverage Association filed a lawsuit against the city of Philadelphia after a similar tax was instituted there. The group claims the tax is unconstitutional.

Preckwinkle said she isn't going to let the potential threat of a lawsuit guide public policy.

The money generated from the new tax will go toward public safety initiatives and stave off more layoffs, officials said.

"We will designate a significant portion of our funding to support collective impact initiatives that work to address violence in our most at-risk communities, and allow us to strengthen the efforts of more community-based organizations working on the ground to support our larger effort to create safe and stable communities throughout Cook County," Preckwinkle said in a prepared statement released shortly before the budget document was made public Thursday.

Preckwinkle pledged not to

raise taxes for three years if the new tax is approved.

She added that tax is also expected to improve public health by reducing the sweetened-drink consumption, much like increased taxes on tobacco products have reduced the number of smokers. She called the tax a "disincentive" to "pop" drinkers.

Similar initiatives are up for public vote in California.

Preckwinkle is no stranger to controversial tax proposals. She proposed a 5-cent bullet tax a few years ago, abandoned it and then brought it back this year.

This will be the second year in a row that Preckwinkle has proposed a significant tax increase to cover county costs. Last year, she persuaded the county board to approve a 1 percentage point increase to the county's sales tax rate to help cover pension costs. However, Preckwinkle's proposed 2017 budget shows that revenue from that increase didn't come in quite as high as expected.

At the start of the budget process last year, the county anticipated \$663.5 million in sales tax revenue. Now, they are projecting \$642.5 million, a difference of \$21 million or a 3.2 percent decline from the original budget amount.

The board is expected to take a vote on the measure in mid-November.

"I think we'll get the nine votes we need," Preckwinkle said.

Why cost of soda could surge

BY JAKE GRIFFIN

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Soda drinkers in Cook County will feel a pop in their wallets if a penny-per-ounce tax on "sweetened beverages" is approved by the county board.

The new tax is the centerpiece of County Board President Toni Preckwinkle's 2017 budget. The tax is expected to generate \$74 million next year and help close an anticipated \$174 million budget shortfall. Preckwinkle expects to cut costs by \$78.5 million more through a series of cost and personnel reductions, which includes 300 layoffs. Layoff notices have already gone out to the affected employees, she added.

The new tax would be on bottled and fountain sodas and on any other drinks that contain sugar or artificial sweeteners, like lemonade or most energy drinks. Milk and baby formula would not be subject to the tax, county officials said. If approved, it will go into effect in July. The anticipated revenue is only four months' worth of collection, county officials said.

A two-liter bottle of soda would generate 68 cents of new tax revenue. Consumers would pay a total of 77 cents in taxes when the 10 percent sales tax is included, bringing the total cost of a two-liter bottle of soda from 89 cents (the sale price Thursday at Jewel-Osco) up to \$1.66.

It would take sales of 108.8 million two-liter bottles to add up to the \$74 million target revenue.

Opponents of the new tax, mainly retailers and distributors, said families who