

NEBA News

May-June 2006

1/2 Cent Sales Tax Increase For Health Care- Do you know all the facts?

County Commissioners are putting a sales tax referendum for indigent health care on the ballot this fall. If this measure passes, Leon County will have the highest sales tax in the state at 8%. The NEBA Board feels this is a regressive tax which would unnecessarily burden those on a low income or fixed income. The tax would raise \$18 million (for which there is not yet even a budget); the current MSTU, also collected for indigent health care, brings in \$1.2 million.

The Board felt that educating our members and the community about this issue may help you make a more informed decision when going to the polls in the fall. Below you will find some points we feel should be considered when deciding whether or not to support this new tax.

*The uninsured problem is overstated. According to the *2004 Florida Health Insurance Study*, Leon County has the lowest level of uninsured in the state (7.7%).

*The consultant did not do an analysis of the clinic revenues but recommends more funding for them. How was this conclusion drawn? Is the Bond Clinic wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars?

*Clinics are not functioning at capacity. Bond Clinic has 7.7 practitioners who perform 22,729 visits per year (2,952 per practitioner). If a practitioner works 48 weeks of the year, this is 12.3 patients per day. Most practitioners see over 25 patients per day. Bond could double its capacity without adding staff. Bond employs 44.8 employees, which is excessive.

*Higher taxes would be a hardship to the people of this county, especially those who would supposedly benefit from the program.

*Private sector sources of funds have not been tapped: private foundations, fundraisers, and contributions from T.E.A.M. congregations.

*The county commission began the indigent health program in 2001, by raising taxes through the MSTU, because they were told it would decrease ER visits and hospitalizations, thus decreasing the cost of insurance to others. There is no empirical evidence that either has

occurred.

*The advocates imply that minorities have a high infant mortality due to inadequate health care. This is false. Low income pregnant women are on Medicaid. Expanding the program will not improve infant mortality rates.

*The \$20,000,000 of charity hospital care is based on usual and customary fees, which is an artificial number. The advocates have also inflated this number by including \$60,000,000 in bad debts, which has nothing to do with charity care.

*Statements that other counties spend more on health care are false. Leon is one of a handful of counties that provides indigent health care.

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Eminent Domain

by: Kurt Tellers
NEBA Secretary

J. Robert McClure III, President and CEO of the James Madison Institute was the featured guest at the May 9, 2006, Northeast Business Association luncheon. The Institute is a non-partisan 'think tank' whose stated goals are to educate and research 'free market applications and solutions.'

"Limited government is the key to personal responsibility which helps insure that a free people will remain free" stated McClure. Private property rights have been threatened by the recent Federal Supreme Courts' Kelo decision interpreting "Eminent Domain" outside of its historical context. "When a

government can take private property and give it to another private entity for more tax revenue or undefined "blight" issues, then the freedoms of the people will be inevitably curtailed." Mr. McClure asserted.

During the lecture, emphasis was placed on limiting taxes, encouraging personal initiative and keeping government focused on advancing private ownership. "What government gives, the government can take away" was reiterated throughout McClure's speech.

Robert McClure's direct style and principled stand along with the research and information materials on conservative economic issues were appreciated by the NEBA membership in attendance.

Don't Miss The Upcoming Meetings!

In the upcoming months NEBA will be hosting candidate forums for local races that will be decided in the September 5th primary and the November 7th general election. We schedule these in an effort to help you make informed decisions. You owe it to yourself and our community to attend these meetings!

We have broken the races into three separate

forum line ups:

- * City Commission seat 3 and seat 5
- *County Commission District 3, District 4 and At-large
- * County Commission District 5, District 1 and the position for Leon County School Superintendent.

Please pay attention to your emails and attend our monthly meetings so you don't miss the action...See you at Lucy Ho's!

March Speakers Mayor John Marks and County Chair Bill Proctor

Kurt Tellers

NEBA Secretary

My Opinion

At the April 13, 2006 North East Luncheon meeting, honored guests, Mayor John Marks and Commissioner William Proctor addressed the assembly of the NEBA membership. Mayor Marks emphasized his interest in economic development and Commissioner Proctor passionately promoted the development of a trauma center to serve Leon County. Their causes on the surface were quite appealing until the issue of funding arose.

Written questions from the membership queried the guests as to a proposed ½ cent sale tax increase to cover the cost of such goals.

Commissioner Proctor felt that

the increase in sales tax would be necessary while Mayor Marks was open to the possibility of such an increase. An 8 % percent sales tax would give Leon County one of the highest levied sales taxes in the nation. When questions such as consolidation of law enforcement efforts were addressed with a potential savings of over a million dollars annually, Major Marks responded that his respect and affection for the police Chief McNeil and Sheriff Campbell made him less inclined to supports such an initiative although he remained open to an effort to consolidate law enforcement dispatching efforts.

Clichés by the mayor, such as the “devil is in the details” when it came to consolidation and Proctor’s statement that the “commissioners are victims of the

legislator” when it came to salary reductions, seemed to this listener to be a little disingenuous and more driven by an egalitarian agenda.

Surprisingly enough, the mayor was not aware that other municipalities have successfully “exercised the demons” in consolidation nor did Mr. Proctor realize that history has proven that an increase in sales tax would depress revenues while enticing Leon County residents to flee to other counties to make purchases on high ticket items.

In my opinion, big government instead of smart government seemed to permeate the quests responses. Noble utopian goals could be achieved if the governance of the county were willing to sacrifice their personal agenda by implementing a fiscally smart plan of funding.

“SALES TAX” from front page

*An ASO (Administrative Services Only) model puts the county at financial risk.

*There is no mechanism to know when to disenroll patients, since eligibility will only be verified once a year. The county could pay for a year’s worth of bills long after someone is not eligible.

*The benefit package includes dental and vision care, which are not available on commercial health insurance programs. Some people

may drop their commercial insurance to receive the free benefits.

*Hundreds of policies have to be written, including what procedures should and should not be covered. Thousands of fees for procedure codes must be determined. Who is going to do this? (Not the ASO).

*The plan provides no mechanism to prevent fraud.

*The plan does not include fee schedules for providers. Low fee schedules may not be acceptable to physicians. If physicians do not

participate, access to care is not improved.

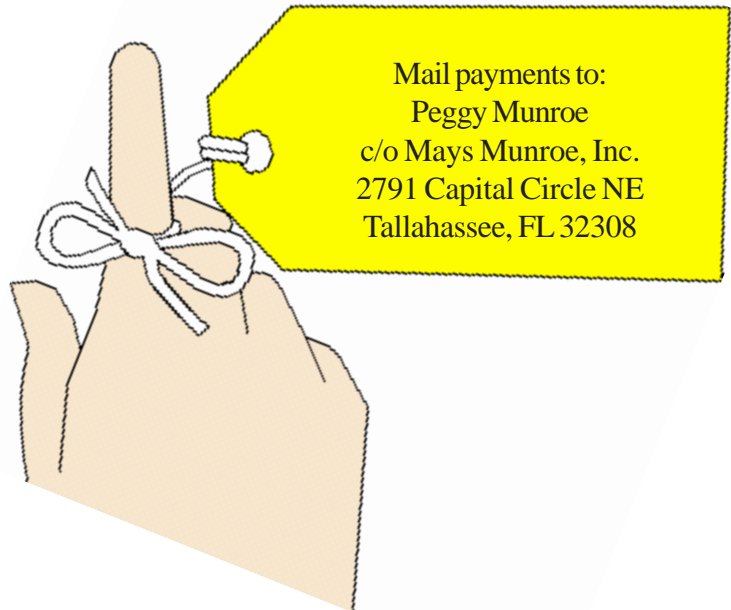
One major flaw in the current indigent health care proposal is that we have not seen any financial records for Bond or NFHS. How can you make a decision on this issue without knowing how the money is currently being spent? If the money that is currently being collected for health care has done nothing to alleviate the problem, how do we know that adding more money on top of that money isn’t just throwing good money after bad?

Calendar

NEBA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at Lucy Ho's-
1700 Halstead Blvd.
from 1:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m.
Cost is \$9.00 per person

June 13- City Seat 3- Lightsey, Viegbesie, McGlynn, Armstrong
City Seat 5- Katz, Moran
July 13-THURSDAY- County District 3- Sellers, Dailey
County District 4- Messer, Carvajal, Bloodworth, Trotman-
At large- Thæll, Desloge
August 8- County District 5- Davis, Detscher, Meyernick, Rackleff, Spence
District 1- Proctor, Khufu, Alexander-
Superintendent- Leon County Schools- Pons, Pridgeon, Palmer

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