



NEBA News

July- August 2006

Candidate Forums Have Provided Interesting Discussions At Meetings



City of Tallahassee Commission candidates- l-r- Seat 5- James Moran and Alan Katz, Seat 3- Anthony Viegbesie, Debbie Lightsey, Brian Armstrong



Leon County Commission- l-r- District 3- John Dailey and District 4- Bo Bludworth, Bryan Desloge, Will Messer

If you have been missing the monthly NEBA meetings, you have certainly been missing out on some of the interesting replies given in answer to many of the questions your fellow NEBA members have asked the various candidates.

These meetings are a way to learn what our different candidates favor or oppose, as well as what their intent for their future in office holds.

See you at the next meeting!

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Leon County Sheriff's Office

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NEBA News

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The North East Business Association publishes NEBA News bi-monthly. Articles of interest are welcome.

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NEBA BOARD MEMBERS OPINIONS

Highest Sales Tax In State

by: Mark Trafton
NEBA Board Director

There's a strong push by some in our community to raise our sales tax an additional one half percent for "indigent" health care. "Indigent" citizens are actually covered by Medicaid so the proposal is mainly for those who cannot afford their own health insurance. Proponents argue this is the best way to go about providing health care for all. The cause is noble. No one (or at least very few people) would argue against helping our community's poor obtain health care. However, this proposal is seriously flawed and could cause great damage to our efforts to attract new businesses and keep current businesses in Leon County.

The proposal would raise our current sales tax rate to 8%, the **HIGHEST** in the state and one of the highest in the whole country. This tax affects everyone. Those on fixed incomes or low incomes would be hurt most. Ironically these are the citizens the proposal tries to help most! There's no doubt consumers would travel to surrounding counties, including Georgia to buy cheaper goods. This obviously would be a drain on our local businesses and would seriously hurt our efforts to attract new ones. Fewer businesses mean

fewer jobs. Again, this hurts everyone.

This tax would bring in an estimated \$18 million in revenue! Yet, the proponents have no detailed budget and do not know exactly how many people will be covered, who will provide the services, what they will be paid, how many will administer the plan, how much overhead expenses will be, etc.. All of these details must be spelled out and an accurate budget must be formulated before throwing such a large sum of money at a problem.

Additionally, no in depth, formal audit has been accomplished on the current system. A portion of our property taxes already goes toward "indigent" health care—\$1.2 million per year. Is this system working? Why or why not. Is more money simply the answer? What about subsidizing small businesses so they can afford to provide health care insurance to their employees? What about streamlining government services, especially those that overlap between the county and city to come up with any additional funds needed?

County tax revenues are at record levels thanks to the real estate market. Why can't a portion of these extra funds go toward indigent health care? It appears absurd to raise taxes at a

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Why Hurt The Poor?

by: Kurt Tellers
NEBA Secretary

The truly indigent should have access to healthcare. Funding the indigents' healthcare needs is the problem.

The proponents of the ½ cent sales tax increase for Leon County are myopic at best. The skewed Robinhood mentality can be summed up with the following facts: Small businesses in Leon County, in order to remain competitive, could be forced to reduce their employees. Guess where these cuts will be made? Those who choose to pay less for a high ticket item(s) will make less than a 30 minute drive to another county where the sales taxes are less. The poor will be forced to purchase locally. The poor will be forced to pay for the poors' healthcare

needs; while those that can afford the increase will seek out other avenues to avoid the increased cost. Higher gas prices coupled with the insecurity of the economy have already hurt the less fortunate. Indigent healthcare will be funded by the poorer in our community.

The noble idea is, in reality, another tax on the poor with a lesser impact on those that can afford it. Commercial property owners will take a hit in their market value. Merchants will scramble to cut overhead delaying planned expansions and hiring. The poor in the community that need help for basic necessities will again be waylaid by an altruistic idea.

Is the overall benefit to those less able to have their budgets again squeezed in line with the small percentage that need subsidized healthcare? I think not. Only 7.7%

of Leon County residents are uninsured -.the lowest rate in the state! Elvis Presley sang it best: "Don't be cruel".

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time when tax receipts are the highest they've ever been!

The County Commissioners have already voted to place this issue on this year's election ballots. Amazingly, they also agreed to spend \$150,000 of your tax dollars to advertise in favor of the tax increase. Now is the time to get involved. Please call, write, or email your city and county officials.

We can and will help those in our community who cannot help themselves. However, this tax increase in not the way to do it. ACT NOW and GET INVOLVED. Thanks for your time.

Healthcare Sales Tax Survey 8/1/06

Listed below are the results from a survey taken in Leon County.

Healthcare Sales Tax Survey

- Opposition to the sales tax increase for healthcare is growing:
 - 56% opposed it in May
 - 63% oppose it in August
- Opposition to the tax increase is greater among lower income residents
- A majority of minority residents (56%) oppose the tax increase
- 77% of residents oppose the County's plan to spend \$150,000

to promote the referendum

- Opposition to spending \$150,000 to promote the referendum is greater among lower income residents
- Minority residents oppose spending \$150,000 to promote the referendum by a 2 to 1 margin
- Top reasons for **not** supporting the tax increase:
 - It will increase sales tax to highest level in Florida
 - Part of property taxes already cover health insurance for the uninsured

– Existing facilities to provide medical services to poor & uninsureds are underutilized

- Top reasons for supporting the tax increase:
 - It will help poor people get health insurance
 - It's the right thing to do to care for less fortunate
 - Uninsured must now choose between insurance and food, housing, etc.

Source: Tallahassee Voices, a pro bono project by Kerr & Downs Research

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

August 8- County District 5-
Anthony Davis, Patrick Detscher, Dorothy Spence, Frank Meyernick, Bob Rackleff
District 1- Bill Proctor, Weser Khufu, Ramon Alexander

September 12- Forum on indigent health care issues

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