



Ethnic Chambers of Commerce Coalition Stands Up for Local Businesses with Endorsement of I-1634

Wednesday, Aug. 29, 2018

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SEATTLE -- At a press conference today in Seattle's International District, the Ethnic Chambers of Commerce Coalition (ECCC) announced their support of Yes! To Affordable Groceries, Washington State Initiative 1634, which will prohibit new, local taxes on food and beverages.

"Small businesses in the Seattle area are already carrying more than their fair share of the tax burden. We have to stop these regressive taxes that weigh down our small business economy," said Martha Lee, who serves as the ECCC president, as well as a board member and former president of the Greater Seattle Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

The ECCC is a coalition of ten ethnic chambers of commerce which, when combined, represent thousands of businesses around the Seattle region.

Mike Sotelo, president of the King County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said I-1634 is important to his members. "There are already more than 1,300 small businesses around Washington that have endorsed I-1634. For them it's a no-brainer: They're operating on thin margins and can't afford unfair taxes."

While the Washington state government doesn't currently collect taxes on food and beverages, there is a loophole in the law that allows local governments to impose taxes on groceries, which hits working families the hardest. The Seattle City Council was able to exploit this loophole in crafting a tax on beverages in 2017. But while this tax targeted beverages, prices on other products have also increased throughout the city as business owners have attempted to implement the complicated policy.

I-1634 takes a proactive step to close this loophole and prevent any new taxes on food, beverages and their ingredients in Washington. It does not reverse or impact the Seattle tax nor any revenue streams that have already been passed by local governments. .

"This initiative is about protecting people from a barrage of taxes like Seattle's from being repeated throughout the state that not only impact working peoples' pocketbooks, but also threaten local businesses and their jobs," added Daniel Kim, executive director of Korean-American Grocers of Washington (KAGRO), a co-filer of I-1634.

The ECCC joins a strong coalition of organizational partners including the Washington Food Industry Association, the Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28, the Washington Farm Bureau, Washington Retail Association [and many more](#).

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Paid for by Yes! to Affordable Groceries, supported by the Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28, Washington Farm Bureau, Washington Food Industry Association, and Korean-American Grocer's Association of Washington, and sponsored by the American Beverage Association. Top 5 contributors: Washington Food Industry Association; The Coca-Cola Company; PepsiCo, Inc.; Keurig Dr Pepper, and Red Bull North America. PO Box 50705, Bellevue, Washington, 98015.