



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cook County Residents, Businesses and Commissioners Toast the End of the County's Beverage Tax

"Cook County is Open for Business!"

(CHICAGO – December 1, 2017) – Cook County residents, businesses and County Commissioners toasted the end of Cook County's unfair and over-reaching sweetened beverage tax at a news conference this morning at Food Market La Chiquita in Cicero. With the beverage tax gone, the group declared that "Cook County is open for business," and urge county residents and consumers to come back to Cook County to shop in their local stores and eat in their local restaurants.

"Let's raise our beverages and toast to the Cook County residents who made their voices heard and let's toast to the restaurants, retailers, vendors, and employees who spoke up and fought for their customers," said **Sam Toia, president and CEO of the Illinois Restaurant Association**, who led the final toast of previously taxed products.

Cook County's beverage tax officially expired on Dec. 1, marking an end to the [wildly unpopular tax](#). Retailers, including [Jewel Osco](#), [Mariano's](#), [Tony's Finer Foods](#) and many others have already begun advertising sales on products no longer subject to the beverage tax in an effort to draw customers back to their Cook County stores.

"Retailers and businesses are already anticipating increased sales and customers returning to the Cook County side of the border to shop," said **Brian Jordan, president of the Illinois Food Retailers Association**. "Cook County is open for business – so come on home."

The penny-per-ounce tax had Cook County residents paying up to 67 percent more on over 1,000 everyday beverages including juices, iced teas, lemonades, flavored waters, sports drinks, pop and even diet drinks. [Retailers in Indiana and the collar counties](#) reported increasing sales, while Cook County retailers [reported beverage sales declines of nearly 50 percent](#).

"If the tax had continued, I would have been forced to cut hours and lay off my workers, people who have become my family," said **Martin Sandoval, general manager of Food Market La Chiquita**. "We are thankful for the Cook County Commissioners who chose to stand with residents and businesses and voted to repeal the beverage tax. "

Cook County became the first local municipality in the United States to repeal its beverage tax when county commissioners voted 15-2 on Oct. 11 to repeal the tax, barely two months after it went into effect. Seven commissioners who had previously supported the tax changed their vote in response to overwhelming and relentless opposition from constituents where [nearly 90 percent of whom opposed the tax](#).



“It is great to celebrate the repeal of the county’s beverage tax and have the burden of this tax lifted from Cook County residents today,” said **Cook County Commissioner Richard Boykin (D-1)**.

“The beverage tax was always bad policy and I’m thrilled to stand with the retailers, restaurants, small business and my constituents to celebrate the tax’s repeal,” added **Cook County Commissioner Peter Silvestri (R-9)**.

The Cook County beverage tax passed in the fall of 2016 on a tie-breaking vote by Cook County President Preckwinkle. It went into effect Aug. 2, 2017. Cook County was the largest municipal government in the country to initiate a sweetened beverage tax and became the first to repeal one.

“The residents and retailers in my district made it clear that they were not happy with the beverage tax and my job is to represent my district,” said **Cook County Commissioner John Daley (D-11)**. “I want to thank my constituents for speaking up. It was a true testament to how government should and does work.”

“I was overwhelmed by letters and calls from residents and businesses in my district in support of a repeal. I always opposed the tax and the voices of Cook County residents made my resolve even stronger,” said **Cook County Commissioner Timothy Schneider (R-15)**.

The Cook County repeal vote was the sixth time this year voters and /or elected officials across the country have rejected or taken steps to prevent the implementation of a beverage tax, including statewide rejections in West Virginia and Michigan. The cities of Tacoma and Spokane, Wash. also explored possible beverage taxes but did not move forward following concerns expressed by residents and businesses. Only one city has voted to initiate a new beverage tax this year.

About the Can the Tax Campaign and Coalition

The *Can the Tax* coalition is an initiative of more than a dozen organizations in Cook County uniting to educate Cook County consumers, businesses and news media about the negative impact of the Cook County beverage tax on our local consumers and businesses. The Coalition urged the Board of Cook County Commissioners to repeal the beverage tax to ensure Cook County residents have access to affordable consumer products and avoid the lost jobs and harm the tax will cause working families. Campaign activities are paid for by the American Beverage Association, a member of the *Can the Tax* campaign and coalition. To learn more, visit StopTheCookCountyTax.com.

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