



“Election shopping” won’t fix flawed tax proposal

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Supporters of a proposed beverage tax in Multnomah County have announced they will hold off until November 2018 to send their initiative to voters. This is now the fourth time supporters of a beverage tax have delayed their plans. Their “election shopping,” now aiming for the November ballot over the May ballot, is an effort to improve their odds of winning. But the date change won’t fix this flawed tax hike.

Multnomah County residents deserve better. The beverage tax proposal has never included any guarantees on how the funds would be spent. The tax is sure to disproportionately impact low income residents by adding to skyrocketing costs of living in our county. It’s certain to hurt neighborhood businesses that don’t have the ability to absorb increased costs as sales sink after customers flee across county lines to shop.

Despite more than \$900,000 in campaign contributions and roughly the same in expenditures over just five months, beverage tax supporters are losing momentum. Delaying a vote until next fall won't make this measure any less harmful, costly or unfair to consumers than the previous four failed tax attempts. Our growing coalition represents more than 690 neighborhood businesses who fear the drastic impacts this tax. Together, we will continue to oppose this failed idea, no matter if or when it qualifies for the ballot. Just think what the \$900,000 spent on the latest failed attempt could have done if it was instead provided to local community services and programs.

Beverage taxes aren’t going over well in other areas around the United States and there’s no reason to believe things would be different in Multnomah County. In our own backyard, in St. Helens, Ore., the president of the City Council couldn’t find one local business owner who supported a beverage tax proposal and the council overwhelmingly shot down the mere idea of a beverage tax. In the Chicago area, the Cook County Commission repealed its beverage tax after roaring opposition from their community less than three months after implementation. In Philadelphia, businesses report significant losses that have resulted in layoffs of workers without any clear benefits to the health and wellness of residents. And in Santa Fe, voters

overwhelmingly said no to a beverage tax, foreseeing the potential harm to residents and the city's economy.

Our coalition will continue to listen to the concerns of Multnomah County residents and to educate the public about the harmful impact this potential tax would have on our community.

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