



**Yakima agriculture and business leaders:  
I-1634 will protect jobs, small businesses, working families**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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YAKIMA -- Aug. 7, 2018 -- Leaders from Yakima Valley's business and agriculture communities gathered at Wray's Food & Drug (Summitview) today to announce support for [Washington State Initiative 1634](#), Yes! To Affordable Groceries, which will prohibit new, local taxes on food and beverages. I-1634 will be on the November ballot.

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. 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 any revenue streams that have already been passed by local governments.

Frank Lyall, a fruit grower and president of the Yakima County Farm Bureau said the impacts of taxes on local growers is underestimated and overlooked. "It seems that everyday there's a new hardship for fruit growers and farmers of the Yakima Valley to endure. Unfair taxes on the juices, baked goods, soups and other items that use our produce impact all of us. We must not make it harder for our farmers to produce and for our customers to afford what we grow."

"Affordability is a growing problem for our residents and our small businesses," said Verlynn Best, president of the Yakima Chamber of Commerce. "When the basics are taxed, the family grocery budget is limited and that has a significant impact on families and the businesses they support with their hard-earned resources. The impact that grocery taxes would have on agricultural production is unquestioned, and that's why we're proud to stand for I-1634 to make sure we protect our agricultural communities."

Haddia Abbas Nazer, with the Central Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce added, "Small businesses immediately feel the impacts of increased taxes whether they're buying products needed for their services or trying to incorporate these new costs into their operating budgets," she said. "They're often forced to make difficult decisions like cutting employee hours or reducing services. We need I-1634 to protect jobs."

Vicki Baker, owner of Grocery Outlet Bargain Market on S. 1st Street, said taxes on groceries are not a new thing in Washington depending on the fiscal straits in which the state government finds itself: “Just as recently as 2010, the state approved taxes on certain items based on their contents. It was a nightmare for my employees who had to try to figure out pricing from item to item. And it was hard for our customers, many of them seniors or families who need to make every penny of the grocery budget stretch.” Those taxes were repealed, she said, but governments are looking for new ways to fund programs. “That’s important, but groceries should remain off limits.”

The organizations participating in today’s press conference represented just a portion of the broad coalition of partners backing I-1634. More than 1,000 small businesses -- grocers, restaurant and cafe owners, convenience stores, bakers and shops of all shapes and sizes -- have endorsed Yes! To Affordable Groceries.

The initiative is also supported by the Washington Food Industry Association, the Washington Retail Association, the Washington Farm Bureau, the Cattlemen’s Association, the State Tree Fruit Association, the State Dairy Federation and labor unions across the state. For more information on our sponsors, visit [our website](#).

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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.