



## **Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Announces Support of I-1634**

*Yes! to Affordable Groceries Initiative Wins Endorsement from Business Group*

**Seattle, WA, October 11, 2018** – Citing the potential damage grocery taxes would have on its members, the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce today announced its support of Initiative 1634, Yes! To Affordable Groceries Act. The November ballot measure would prohibit new local taxes on food and beverages.

“Here in Seattle, small businesses, including immigrant-owned and minority-owned businesses, have spoken up about bearing the brunt of the City’s sweetened beverage tax,” said Marilyn Strickland, President and CEO of the Seattle Metro Chamber. “I-1634 is a step to protect other communities from similar local taxes on groceries.”

With this endorsement, the Seattle Metro Chamber joins a coalition of more than 1,400 organizations, including major statewide partners from labor, agriculture, and business. The coalition was founded in Spring 2018 with initial support from the Washington Farm Bureau, the Washington Food Industry Association, the Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28, and the Korean American Grocers Association.

The coalition has expanded to include associations representing businesses of all sizes, including the Central Area Chamber of Commerce, Lakewood Chamber of Commerce, the Pasco Chamber of Commerce Coalition, Better Spokane, the Greater Spokane

Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce. (A full list of coalition partners can be found [here](#)).

While the Washington state government does not currently collect taxes on food and beverages, the explanatory statement from the [Office of the Attorney General](#) in November's voter guide confirms that local governments can use a "privilege tax" to impose taxes on groceries. This loophole in the law has been exploited by the Seattle City Council with the recently imposed sweetened beverage tax. Taxes on groceries hit working families the hardest and I-1634 takes the proactive step to close this loophole and prevent any new taxes that target food, beverages and their ingredients in Washington.

One of the dangers of these measures is that if certain items are taxed, it affects prices across the shopping cart. In speaking about Seattle's new beverage tax, [City Finance Director](#) Glen Lee said: "A retailer may increase their prices for other brands, other product lines, lawn care, meat, poultry, to recover what they perceive are extra expenses that they have from the distributor."

Seattle small business owners, who acknowledge that they have had to raise prices on other items as well to shoulder this burden, have joined in support of I-1634 because they have seen this impact firsthand. Coalition member Prem Singh [recently wrote](#) that, "Confronted with razor-thin margins, I have had to increase prices across my shelves to stay afloat. I know and understand my customers. When they see increased prices at my store, they have no other choice but shop someplace else, even crossing city lines."

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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.*