



### **Coalition Submits Language for November Ballot Initiative Prohibiting New Local Grocery Taxes**

*Measure supported by Farmers, Business, Grocers and Community Groups would cap food and beverage taxes at the local level*

**Seattle, March 15, 2017** – In a significant step to deter taxes on groceries in Washington state, the Yes! To Affordable Groceries coalition today submitted language to the Washington State Secretary of State's office for an initiative on the November ballot that will keep groceries affordable and free of new local taxes. The ballot measure would prohibit new local taxes on everyday groceries like meat and poultry, fruits and vegetables, bread, milk, cheese and beverages. The measure would cap existing local taxes on groceries at their current rates and would not end or reverse existing revenue streams that have already been passed by local governments.

Yes! To Affordable Groceries is a coalition of citizens, farmers, businesses and community organizations supported by state groups including the Korean American Grocer's Association, Washington Food Industry Association, Washington Farm Bureau and the Joint Council of Teamsters, and sponsored by the American Beverage Association. The coalition is advancing this campaign in the interest of small businesses, workers and the working families who are disproportionately impacted by local tax measures and of low and middle-income families who are burdened by an unfair tax structure. The coalition contends that Washington, which has been named as the state with the most burdensome tax structure for lower-income families in the [country](#), unfairly places a greater tax burden on low- and middle-income families than it does the wealthy. Taxes on food and beverages would only make things worse for these families.

[Recent studies](#) have confirmed that Seattle is now the sixth most expensive city in the United States and other areas of Washington state are also experiencing increases in the cost of living, making it more difficult for working families to afford the basics. The coalition believes that raising taxes on groceries would especially hurt low- and fixed-income families who cannot afford any additional price hikes on basic necessities.

"We applaud this initiative and the campaign to put a halt to any further taxes on food and beverages, give working families a voice, and help keep the cost of living in check throughout the state," said Pete Lamb, Business Agent of Teamsters Local 174.

Seattle's recently enacted beverage tax has raised concerns among working families, storeowners and communities that similar measures may be repeated and expanded throughout the state to include everyday food items. Additionally, there have been news reports of pro-tax advocacy groups pushing for high taxes on everyday foods and beverages, including [meats](#) and beverages.

The Seattle beverage tax and similar measures in Cook County and Philadelphia have hurt the local economy and have directly impacted small businesses. Seattle’s measure has seen strong opposition from local businesses that are feeling the impact on their livelihoods. Neighborhood grocers, markets, food trucks, take-out spots and restaurants are experiencing a significant drop in sales due to the beverage [tax](#).

“Our store owners and workers throughout the state know full well the harm that will result from price increases of core products like food and beverages and the impact it will have on their bottom line as well as the impact to their customers. We are in favor of this initiative and this campaign which takes a stand against any more taxes on food and beverages and protecting our customers from any measures that make their groceries less affordable,” said Daniel Kim, General Manager of the Korean American Grocer’s Association of Washington.

The expansion of taxes into other areas not only poses a threat to small businesses throughout the state but could have a significant impact on major jobs sectors like agriculture, which is the second largest sector in the state.

“Any action against food or beverage products will directly impact our members – the very people who are part of the food supply chain that provides the food, feed, fiber, and fuel for our state, nation and the world. This initiative is essential to efforts to keep life in Washington affordable for the agricultural community as well as the people we serve,” said John Stuhlmiller, who heads the Washington Farm Bureau.

Per Washington state law, the Secretary of State’s office will review the language and will provide its input in the coming weeks as the next step in finalizing the initiative.

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### Background

Yes! To Affordable Groceries is a group of citizens, businesses and community organizations actively opposing new taxes on everyday grocery items, such as meats, dairy and beverages. We’re taking a stand to bring fairness to our tax structure, to protect jobs and neighborhood businesses and to prevent excessive taxation on what we eat and drink. Join us to say YES to keeping groceries affordable.

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