

Board of County Commissioners

Doris I. Herringshaw, Ed.D. Craig LaHote Dr. Theodore H. Bowlus



November 30, 2018

The Honorable Marlene Anielski
Ohio State Representative and Chair of the State and Local Government Committee

Dear Representative Anielski:

We take this opportunity to write to you regarding the proposed House Bill 720 which would require voter approval for county sales tax to be increased. We write to voice our opposition to this change and offer the following comments:

County commissioners in Ohio are elected representatives of the citizens in their respective counties. Under current law, before a sales tax increase can be approved by the commissioners, two public hearings must be held. As an example, this past year the State Legislature approved legislation to allow county commissioners increase the vehicle license fee by \$5. The same public hearing rules applied. Our meetings were well publicized in the local media. One member of the public came to one of the meetings, and that was to voice his support. We are not aware of any opposition that might have considered a referendum. Our citizens talk to us frequently as we daily attend meetings, luncheons, fairs and festivals, Eagle Scout award programs, and many other events. We would have known if there was disagreement.

If the House Bill 720 is approved, it will result in an automatic expense to county taxpayers. As you know, elections cost money. Under current law there is a choice as to whether an election is needed. Based on our experience with the vehicle license fee, while there was no apparent opposition to the increase, HB 720 would automatically require a referendum and the cost of a ballot initiative. For what reason?


While Ohio counties all live under the same State Laws, the circumstances in each county can vary widely. Counties face significant expenses today to combat the opioid epidemic. They also face challenges related to an evolving retail environment that is increasingly based on internet sales rather than brick and mortar stores. The costs of road and bridge maintenance and construction is an ever increasing burden. Being able to adjust revenue sources to provide the greatest level of service to tax payers is vitally important. HB 720 would create an unnecessary road block.

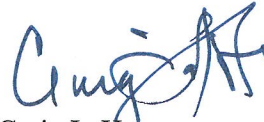
Finally, a question. Would HB 720 apply to the State of Ohio as well as counties? The Wood County Commissioners have not raised our 1% sales tax in over 30 years, and we have no intention of doing so. The State's sales tax has increased during this time. We presume this was done to adjust revenues to meet present day needs.


Thank you for taking time to listen to our thoughts on HB 720. We would be pleased to discuss this further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS,
WOOD COUNTY, OHIO


Doris I. Herringshaw, Ed.D.


Craig LaHote


Dr. Theodore H. Bowlus

cc: Randy Gardner, Ohio State Senator

Theresa Gavarone, Ohio State Representative

S:\ASK\Sales Tax Approval Legislation.docx