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New tax proposal would punish Cuyahoga County families and sports fans, hurt city

Proposing to punish Cuyahoga County families and sports fans by imposing a new, large ticket tax to pay for major repairs at our three major league venues is terribly flawed on multiple fronts.

The group proposing the peculiar idea announced earlier today offers up a confusing thought process: On the one hand, they bemoan the cost of ticket prices, but now they want to considerably raise those prices. They are proposing to make it even more difficult for Cuyahoga County families to attend sporting events.

County Councilman Pernel Jones said: "There is nothing fair about this plan that has ironically been dubbed 'FairShare'. By pricing families out of games, this would result in smaller crowds – which means less business for those businesses that depend upon fans. That puts jobs at risk."

There is an existing 8% admissions tax on tickets in Cleveland. That tax is already one of the highest in the country. Revenues from that tax now go to the city to pay for a wide range of public services. Increasing the price of admission would discourage attendance. Fewer fans would mean less revenue for the city to pay for basic municipal services.

"This is simply the latest in a steady stream of wobbly ideas this group has trotted out in a misguided attempt to replace the existing tax on cigarettes and alcohol – which costs 1.5 cents a beer and less than a nickel for a pack of cigarettes," County Councilman Dan Brady said. "These various ideas have been hatched and then publicly floated with apparently little thought, and none of them have stuck. Today we see the latest trial balloon. As soon as one idea loses steam, they float yet another."

County Council President C. Ellen Connally added: "Punishing families and Cleveland's sports fans by placing a substantial new tax on their tickets is wrong and misguided. For a group that opposes continuing to pay a mere 1.5 cents a beer without increasing taxes, it's confusing that they now want to enact a new, large tax that hits families the hardest."

Cuyahoga County already has in place a fair, low-cost method of meeting the public's obligations to finance major repairs at our three sports venues. Issue 7 is not a tax increase – it merely continues the tiny, existing tax on alcohol and tobacco.

"There is no need to raise taxes or invoke new taxes to meet this obligation," said Cleveland City Council President Kelley. "Renewing this tax – voting yes on Issue 7 – will simply continue the system we have had in place for 24 years."

If a mother and father take their two children to a game, it would cost them an additional \$13 for one game. (To generate the same amount of revenues under the existing tax plan, they would

have to drink 866 beers or consume 289 packs of cigarettes. Imagine what those numbers would be if that family went to five or 10 games a year.)

“But under this deficient plan for a new tax, families would likely go to fewer games,” Kelley said. “Further, adding any additional costs would make the facilities less competitive to attract events.”

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