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Issue 7 Wins

Voters pass “Sin Tax” to fund repairs to public-owned sports facilities and keep Cleveland strong

CLEVELAND – May 7, 2014 – Cuyahoga County voters Tuesday recommitted to Cleveland’s 86-year partnership with its professional sports teams by approving Issue 7, which extends for 20 years Cuyahoga County’s “sin tax” on cigarettes and alcohol to pay for major repairs to Cleveland’s sports facilities.

“This is a great win for the city, the county and all of Northeast Ohio,” said Cleveland City Council President Kevin Kelley. “Continuing this small tax helps ensure that Cleveland will remain a major league city. Passage of Issue 7 means that our three major league sports facilities will be well-maintained and will offer many, many more years of service for our residents.”

Cuyahoga County Councilman Pernel Jones, Jr., said passage of Issue 7 was a team effort.

“We had a diverse, wide-ranging coalition of supporters ranging from civic leaders to organized labor,” Jones said. “Nobody likes taxes, but this is the small price we pay for being a major league city. We simply need to keep these buildings in major league condition. Having three major league sports teams in Cleveland is a huge asset for all of Cuyahoga County for many, many good reasons.”

Joe Roman, President and CEO of the Greater Cleveland Partnership, said passage of Issue 7 shows that Cuyahoga County residents realize the progress that is occurring in Cleveland.

“Downtown Cleveland is in the midst of a multi-billion dollar revitalization that includes new buildings, new residents and new jobs,” Roman said. “The trigger for that revitalization was the decision to build the ballpark and the arena downtown. Having our sports facilities downtown yields untold benefits for Greater Cleveland. We must continue all that we can do to encourage this precious, undeniable momentum that we have in Cleveland right now. Passing Issue 7 helps us to keep the progress moving.”

Roman thanked the teams for being community partners, and said that even with Issue 7’s passage, the teams will continue to make significant investments in the three facilities and in the community.

Jeff Rusnak, President and CEO of the R Strategy Group and lead campaign consultant to the Issue 7 campaign, said: “When we started, there were broad misunderstandings about this issue and our polling numbers showed we were behind by a large margin. The leadership of the campaign had faith that voters could and would recognize the benefits of this issue and they were right.”

“This issue was never just about the teams – it was about a partnership that benefits all of us,” Rusnak said. “We built a campaign to reflect that. The support of the Cleveland Cavaliers, Indians, and Browns,

key elected leaders from the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, and Greater Cleveland Partnership and COSE provided a core that we built around, adding the backing of labor unions, like the AFL-CIO, UAW, NAACP, FOP, and Building Trades, and elected officials, like the Mayors and Managers Association.”

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