

CLARK COUNTY ADVISORY QUESTION NO. 9

2004 Public Safety Advisory Question

This question is advisory only: Do you support an increase in the sales and use tax in Clark County of up to 1/2 of 1% for the purpose of hiring and equipping more police officers to protect the citizens of Clark County?

Yes

No

EXPLANATION

With voter support of this question, Clark County will seek authorization from the Nevada State Legislature to levy an additional sales and use tax of up to 1/2 of 1%. The proposed increase would initially be 1/4 of 1%, beginning July 1, 2005, and would increase to a maximum of 1/2 of 1% beginning July 1, 2009. Food for home consumption, prescription drugs and medical supplies are not subject to sales and use taxes. Revenue generated would be allocated for use by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and the police departments of Boulder City, Henderson, Mesquite and North Las Vegas to hire and equip additional police officers.

The actual number of officers for each jurisdiction may vary, depending on future economic growth. It is estimated that within the first 10 years, sufficient revenue will be generated to enable the agencies within Clark County to hire and equip the following number of officers: Boulder City 16, Henderson 227, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department 1,278, Mesquite 14, and North Las Vegas 151.

The question is purely advisory in nature and does not place any legal requirement on the governing body or any office of the political subdivision or the Nevada Legislature.

ARGUMENT ADVOCATING PASSAGE

What would you be willing to spend for the safety of your family? The strain of growth has changed the nature of policing in this valley, from one of proactive patrols and prevention, to one of a response mode for crimes that have already occurred.

The national average of police officer ratio in the United States is 2.5 officers per 1,000 residents. The current ratio of police officers in Clark County is 1.7 officers per 1,000 residents. As the population in Clark County increases at historical proportions, it has caused the acceptable officer ratio to drop as the crime rates increased.

Our community is now experiencing increased crime rates and consequently, longer police response time to those crimes. The threat of terrorism is very real in today's age. Our police officers now have the added responsibilities of homeland security.

The increase in sales and use taxes will allow additional police officers to be hired. Sales and use taxes are paid by residents, businesses, and tourists. This means the cost of hiring additional police officers will be shared among all taxpayer groups that receive vital law enforcement services within Clark County. Tourists and businesses, including the construction and gaming industries, pay approximately 60%—the majority of the sales taxes collected. The residents of Clark County provide for the approximate balance of 40%.

Twenty-five dollars a year is a small price to pay to ensure that more police officers are in your neighborhoods. The additional officers will reduce response times and give you the peace of mind knowing you and your family are safer and more secure.

The above argument was submitted by the Ballot Question Committee as provided for in NRS 295.121

ARGUMENT OPPOSING PASSAGE

Vote "No" on another tax increase.

Six to seven thousand people move into Clark County every month. Construction of additional homes to house these new residents, plus the new business property that is built to serve them, adds to the property tax base every year. The recent higher valuations on existing property further add to the tax base. Property taxes that are collected from increased growth and higher valuations will be significantly greater and will continue to grow. Over the last 12 months, taxable sales have increased by 13.8%, which provides more sales tax revenue in Clark County.

These new and increased taxes should be sufficient to pay for any additional police officers needed by the law enforcement agencies in Clark County. As the population increases in Clark County, will we need more police? Yes. Should taxes be increased to pay for additional police? NO. Growth should pay for itself.

The problem with tax increases is that they never go away. A 1/4% increase in sales tax in 2005 will cost an additional \$2.50 per \$1,000.00 of taxable purchases. If these increases are approved, in 2009 the Clark County sales tax will be 8% (highest in the state). If you buy a \$20,000.00 vehicle you will pay \$1,600.00 in sales tax.

Can you afford another tax increase?

The above argument was submitted by the Ballot Question Committee as provided for in NRS 295.121

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT OPPOSING PASSAGE

Population growth in Clark County is substantial, however all residents are not property owners and do not pay property tax. Regardless, revenue from growth and property tax would not be adequate or timely enough to hire and equip a sufficient number of police officers to support the increasing demand for services.

Sales taxes are not collected on basic needs such as groceries, gasoline, rent, prescription medicines, and medical supplies. Sales tax ensures that all taxpayers support the necessity for additional police officers.

The number of police officers in Clark County is far below the national average, and the need is critical. The longer we wait, the greater the risk to our communities.

If approved, anyone who purchases a \$20,000 vehicle in 2005 would experience a \$50.00 increase in tax. And, for that same purchase starting in 2009, an additional \$50.00 increase. How often does the average resident purchase a vehicle, and isn't it a small cost to protect it?

We are advocating safe and secure communities that we can all live in with the burden shared by all taxpayers, not just homeowners.

The above argument was submitted by the Ballot Question Committee as provided for in NRS 295.121

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT ADVOCATING PASSAGE

Nevada had no sales tax before 1956. Even then the argument for a new tax was "the tourists will pay." Forty-Eight years later the same argument is still being used. If there is any doubt in your mind about whom pays the taxes in Clark County, look in the mirror.

Every government department and its budget grow endlessly. Bureaucrats look at taxpayers as a bottomless source of funding. Public Safety in Clark County has always been supported by property taxes. In the past five years, property tax revenues have increased 51%, from \$869 million in 2000-2001 to an estimated \$1.3 billion in 2004-2005. In the same time period LVMPD's budget has grown over 40%, from \$274 million to \$383 million. Collecting more tax dollars to fund law enforcement agency budgets does not guarantee more police officers in our neighborhoods.

Sales tax hurts low-income families because they pay a higher percentage of their income for necessities. If this tax increase is passed, you will pay \$1.00 for every \$12.50 you spend on taxable sales. Can you afford this on top of the huge property tax increases?

New taxes increase and never end. Tax increases won't end until the voters say NO!

*The above argument was submitted by the Ballot Question
Committee as provided for in NRS 295.121*

FISCAL NOTE

The sales and use tax increase would continue until no longer required to support additional police officers. The average cost to a payer of sales and use tax in Clark County for the initial 1/4 of 1% increase is expected to be \$12.50 per year, based on \$5,000 in annual expenditures on goods that are subject to sales and use tax. The annual cost of the maximum 1/2 of 1% increase to a payer of sales and use tax in Clark County would be \$25, based on \$5,000 in annual expenditures on goods that are subject to sales and use tax. Additional expenses are expected to be incurred to pay for civilian staff and facilities required to support the additional police officers, which will be funded through the regular operating budgets of each respective agency.