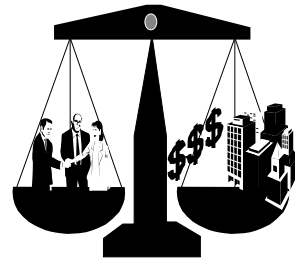


Citizens for Common Sense



Jan. 2009

Seeking government that is responsible and responsive to taxpayers in St. Joseph County, IN

Tax Staved Off!

Thanks to overwhelming public participation, the Local Option Income Taxes (LOIT) were averted over the Christmas holiday. You taxpayers all over St. Joseph County were amazing! You called the council members, you wrote letters to the editor, you showed up at the hearing and carried signs in front of the County-City Building. So many of you sent e-mails that at one point the Council members were getting over 60 a day!

Special thanks to the various citizen groups who passed the word around and came out to wear the red t-shirts. Those shirts created a memorable media image that we intend to use again and again if necessary!

Will the tax be brought up again? There are rumors that it could resurface as early as next month, although the statutes say the next deadline is August 1. Stay tuned.

More Battles to Fight:

AUTEN ROAD CONNECTOR

As part of its plan to create a new office/mall/apartment area to be called Portage Prairie in northern German Township, South Bend wants to extend Auten Road to the 31 Bypass. Residents have long opposed a new exit ramp there on the grounds that there are already two exits within some four miles of it, and most of us don't believe that another exit will somehow make businesses and apartments spring up. It hasn't happened at either of the two existing exits, and it hasn't happened at the Blackthorn area to the south. Is this another "bridge to nowhere" at our (taxpayer) expense? As a first step, South Bend wants to move \$350,000 out of the Major Moves Fund to build a connector. Shouldn't this money be repairing our existing roads? Concerned citizens should come to the South Bend Common Council meeting:

Mon, Feb. 23 at 7pm

County-City Bldg, Jefferson & Lafayette, S.B.

Citizens for Common Sense, Inc. / PO Box 226 / Granger, IN 46530 /

TERMINAL RENOVATION

The Airport Authority, to which everyone in the county pays property taxes, wants to float a \$6 million bond for renovations to Concourse A at the South Bend Regional Airport. The claim is that these funds are to be raised from the price of tickets, but with fewer and fewer flights being offered by the airport, we taxpayers have to wonder who gets left holding the bag when the bond payments come due. And what's wrong with the current appearance of the concourse? One possibility is that because of the recent revelation that the airport TIF district is sitting on some \$24 million, this is an attempt to spend that money rather than find a way to release it to help pay general government operating expenses. Concerned taxpayers should come express their concerns at the Airport Authority Board meeting:

Thurs, Feb. 26 at 11:30am

Authority Board Rm, Airport, 4477 Progress Dr.

Kelly Havens / 272-7606 / www.citizensforcommonsense.info

Tax Abatement Ordinance

The St. Joseph County Council is working on a tax abatement ordinance. Originally begun as an effort to put some teeth into the tax abatement process, so that businesses who get abatements actually have to produce the jobs they promised or lose their abatement, the ordinance got hijacked by a variety of special interest groups. As it currently stands it would seriously hamper efforts to bring new businesses into our county.

There are 3 major problems with the ordinance:

1) It requires that potential businesses meet a certain number of points in order to qualify for any more than a base 3-year abatement. Points are awarded for things such as employee daycare, an environmentally green footprint, and a tie-in with local university research. A preliminary cost analysis showed that to get a \$150,000 abatement, a business would have to spend close to \$250,000!

2) For anything more than the base 3-year abatement, a business would have to hire union laborers for its construction. Union workers represent only 15% of the construction labor force, so the county would be officially shutting out 85% of

our local construction laborers and their families. Why should this particular special interest group (the unions) get preferential treatment?

3) The one thing that was hoped for in this ordinance, making the penalties stricter for failure to provide promised jobs, was not addressed! The terms still say that if a company doesn't meet its contractual agreements, the Council "may" review it and "could" elect to terminate or penalize. No penalties are guaranteed!

It is no wonder that counties to our south are offering to come up and speak in favor of this bill. If site locators operating out of Chicago bypass St. Joe County due to an ungainly abatement process, that means more new businesses for Marshall, Marion and other counties instead of us. Do we really want to see businesses routed AWAY from St. Joe County? This abatement ordinance needs *major* repairs before it gets voted on. Contact councilmen and plan to attend the County Council hearing:

Tues, Mar. 10 at 7pm (anticipated)
County-City Bldg, Jefferson & Lafayette, S.B.

What You Can Do on these Issues

- ***Get the word out.*** Tell neighbors, clubs, friends and relatives who live in St. Joe County about these three tax-related issues.
- ***Contact your elected officials.*** See Contact sheet. For Auten Road, contact the South Bend Common Council; for the airport terminal, contact the Airport Authority; for the abatement ordinance, contact the County Council & Commissioners.
- ***Get your e-mail address to Common Sense.*** The only way we can get urgent updates to you is thru e-mail. We will NOT share your address even with our own mailing list. E-mail Kelly Havens at c-havens@sbcglobal.net to get on this list.
- ***Send a donation to Common Sense.*** If you haven't sent a donation recently, please consider a small donation to help us send out these newsletters.
- ***Plan to attend the hearings.*** Grab a friend and attend the appropriate hearing. Think about the points you would like to make and look for the public hearing portion.