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## Dewhurst, Straus urged to reject North Texas local option tax plan

5:02 PM Fri, Mar 06, 2009 | Permalink | Yahoo! Buzz

Michael Lindenberger  E-mail  News tips

When North Texas leaders mulled how best to convince the Legislature to authorize local officials to call sales tax elections to pay for rail expansion, they finally decided to give up their long (and losing) fight with businesses who had opposed sales taxes from the beginning.

Bowing to pressure from those business interests, members of the Regional Transportation Council got behind a new bill that would give counties the right to call elections asking voters to raise all sorts of fees or taxes, though not sales taxes, to pay not just for rail but for other transportation needs as well. They call it a local-option tax bill.

Despite a powerful sponsor in the the Senate in transportation chairman John Carona, and Rep. Vicki Truitt's backing in the House, prospects for passage haven't gotten better with the gathering economic storm clouds. And on Friday, the Texas Public Policy Foundation blasted the proposal as ill-timed, and sent letters to Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and Speaker Joe Straus urging them to kill the bills.

"With Texas businesses and families facing such economic stress, our state government needs to send a clear message that it understands their plight and will not add to their financial burdens," Justin Keener, a vice president with the foundation wrote. "We must not send any signal to the markets, businesses, or public that Texas is even thinking about raising taxes."

Last week, Texas Transportation Commissioner Bill Meadows of Fort Worth said he was concerned about some aspects of the new bill, namely the possibility that it would allow counties to impose local surcharges to the state motor fuels tax -- a move that he said could make lawmakers even more reluctant to raise gas taxes in the future. He said local officials would have been better off asking again for permission to hold sales tax elections.

But Bill Allaway, president of Texas Taxpayers and Research Association, said opposition to sales tax increases is stronger than ever, and certainly just as potent among business as in 2005 and 2007, when the previous efforts to allow local increases failed. "There is near unanimous business opposition to busting the state sales tax cap," Allaway said Friday.

But he said his group is not opposed to the local option bill, at least not in principle. "We've been working quite closely with them on this bill," he said. "In a sense this bill addresses the majority of the issues we raised. The bill is regional in scope, the funding sources are all related to things that have something to do with transportation, it requires a significant amount of sort of planning and disclosure to the public about what they are being asked to finance, gives them a choice. We've seen each of the iterations, and it gets better and better each time."

The proposal keeps changing, he said, as it is tweaked. You can [read the bill here](#).

## Comments

Posted by **Lisa** @ 10:25 PM Fri, Mar 06, 2009

North Texas leaders are getting to damn greedy on how to extort money from its citizens. Maybe its finally time for the cities and counties to learn how do with less revenue and face reality just like everyone else is beginning to realize. yes, it sucks, but its time for reality to set in with those who are parasites

[report as objectionable](#)

Posted by **Chris** @ 1:35 AM Sun, Mar 08, 2009

Why don't they cut some of their budgets and lay off people like the businesses are forced to do? We could do much better with fewer government employees.

NO more taxes. I will vote against this and will campaign to ensure others do as well - government needs to stop being greedy and passing laws to take more money from people and learn how to live on a budget.

As George Bush says, "Dead my line, no new taxes!"

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