

Election — November 3, 2020



## **Information on 2020 Ballot Issue 2A in Louisville, Colorado**

Compiled by the League of Women Voters of Boulder County

*The League of Women Voters is not responsible for the accuracy or fairness of the arguments of either side.*

### **City of Louisville Ballot Issue 2A [Disposable Bag Tax]**

SHALL CITY OF LOUISVILLE TAXES BE INCREASED BY \$2,000,000 IN THE FIRST FULL FISCAL YEAR AND BY WHATEVER ADDITIONAL AMOUNTS ARE RAISED ANNUALLY THEREAFTER, BY IMPOSING, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2022, A NEW TAX ON DISPOSABLE BAGS PROVIDED TO A CUSTOMER BY A RETAILER AT THE RATE OF UP TO TWENTY-FIVE CENTS (\$0.25) PER BAG, WITH THE TAX REVENUES BEING USED TO PAY FOR OR REIMBURSE THE CITY FOR DIRECT AND INDIRECT COSTS INCURRED FOR ADMINISTERING THE TAX OR EXPENDED BY THE CITY FOR OTHER SUSTAINABILITY-RELATED INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS; WITH THE AMOUNT OF THE TAX BEING ALLOWED TO BE INCREASED OR DECREASED WITHOUT FURTHER VOTER APPROVAL SO LONG AS THE AMOUNT OF THE TAX DOES NOT EXCEED \$0.25 PER BAG, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ANY ORDINANCES HEREAFTER APPROVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LOUISVILLE; AND WITH THE CITY COUNCIL BEING AUTHORIZED TO MAKE SUCH CHANGES TO THE DISPOSABLE BAG TAX PROGRAM AS MAY BE IMPLEMENTED BY ORDINANCES HEREAFTER ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL, INCLUDING CHANGING WHICH RETAILERS MUST COLLECT THE TAX, PROVIDING FOR OR REPEALING EXEMPTIONS FROM THE TAX OR TAX CREDITS, OR CHANGING THE RATE OF THE TAX, SO LONG AS THE TAX DOES NOT EXCEED TWENTY-FIVE CENTS (\$0.25) PER BAG; AND SHALL THE CITY BE AUTHORIZED TO COLLECT AND SPEND SUCH REVENUE AS A VOTER APPROVED REVENUE CHANGE UNDER ARTICLE X, SECTION 20 OF THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION, AND SHALL ORDINANCE NO. 1797, SERIES 2020, WHICH IMPOSES THE TAX, BE APPROVED?

### **Major Provisions**

The measure proposes a single-use bag tax, beginning 1/1/2022, that would apply to all retailers in Louisville. The tax would be applied to all paper and plastic disposable bags, with exceptions such as bulk items, bakery goods, newspaper bags, dry cleaning bags. Retailers providing paper bags would only be able to provide recycled paper bags.

If passed, the ordinance will require that retailers collect a tax of up to \$0.25 per disposable bag, retaining \$.10 per bag for their implementation expenses. Any customer who participates in a federal or state food assistance program is exempt from the tax. The remainder of the tax is to be used by the City to administer the tax and fund sustainability-related programs. The City Council could adjust the tax amount, not to exceed \$0.25 per bag, as well as the retailers it applies to, without going back to voters for approval.

## **Background**

This ballot issue is referred to the voters by Louisville City Council as part of the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) that was adopted by the City in 2016. The SAP established Louisville's vision to "create a more sustainable community, as well as provide a roadmap for achieving these collective goals". One such strategy is "promoting recyclable substitutes/replacements for single-use, throw-away items, such as plastic bags".

### **Those IN FAVOR say**

- Litter from single use bags is highly visible making it a "low-hanging fruit" opportunity to create more action and awareness around waste reduction efforts.
- Life cycle assessments reveal that both plastic and paper bags use significant finite resources and produce greenhouse gas emissions in production and waste.
- Most commercial plastic bags do not include a high amount of recycled plastic film and recycling programs do not accept the majority of plastic bags and film.
- Stores could save money by decreasing or eliminating the need to provide free single use bags. Many consumers already have reusable bags and would be more likely to remember to bring them.
- The City's administration of the bag tax remittance would provide distributional benefits for lower-income households.

### **Those OPPOSED say**

- Single use bags are not a significant litter issue in the community.
- Single use bags are not a large part of the local waste stream and there is not a strong local environmental impact by reducing them.
- Plastic and paper bags can be reused for household purposes. Reducing the supply of bags through a tax could force customers to purchase bags for such purposes.
- Administration of the bag tax comes at a cost to commercial entities.
- Costs to purchase quality reusable bags will put a financial strain on lower-income households that do not already have reusable bags.

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