

October 11, 2013

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National Poll Shows Support for Sales Tax Fairness

On October 8, [ICSC released the results of a poll](#) conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation that demonstrates growing support for sales tax fairness legislation. Since October 2012, when the last poll was conducted, there has been an increase in support by five percentage points. Voters also overwhelmingly prefer to have the sales tax on online purchases collected at the time of sale. Awareness of their current obligation has increased by 23 percentage points, suggesting that the education and outreach campaign has had a significant impact.

Key Findings:

- 64% of voters support federal legislation that would require online-only sellers to collect sales tax at the time of sale.
- 78% of voters feel it would be far easier to pay sales or use tax on online purchases at the time of sale.
- 64% of voters are aware that they are required to pay state sales or use tax on online purchases, if NOT collected by the vendor, through special forms or when they file their state income taxes.

This poll comes on the heels of U.S. House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) releasing principles that should be embodied in any sales tax fairness legislation. This action by the Chairman represents a positive step forward in the House, where legislation is pending. The Marketplace Fairness Act was passed in the Senate in May. [Click here to read ICSC press release on the principles.](#)

Annual NLC Report Points to Improving Conditions for U.S. Cities

On October 10, the National League of Cities' (NLC) released the results of its 28th annual Survey of City Finance Officers. The survey results reveal an overall picture of a gradually improving economy and improving city fiscal conditions. A majority of city finance officers reported that their cities are better able to meet financial needs in 2013 than in 2012. They indicated that this was largely a result of slowly improving housing markets and increased consumer spending, which are strengthening local tax bases and economic outlooks in local and regional economies. However, continued high levels of unemployment, uncertainty about federal and state actions, and long-term pension and health benefit obligations continue to constrain the potential for strong economic growth for many cities. Strengthening real estate markets (although regional markets will vary considerably) will help cities turn the corner from property tax revenue decline to growth, but the effects will be spread out over several years. Key findings, as well as a complete copy of the results, [can be found on the National League of Cities website.](#)

IN: Gov. Pence (R-IN) Continues Push for MF

ICSC Central Division GR Chair Robert Thatcher, who also serves as Chairman of the Economic

Development Council for the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce, delivered a robust update last week on "The Elkhart County Indiana Miracle" to several hundred attendees at the group's annual luncheon. During the event he advocated for Main Street Fairness legislation as "An Effective Economic Development Tool" for communities nationwide. The event also featured Indiana Governor Mike Pence (R) as the Keynote Speaker. Gov. Pence previously served 12 years in the US House of Representatives and was an early advocate and co-Sponsor of Main Street Fairness legislation in the House. In his speech, the Governor highlighted ICSC's involvement on this issue and assured the audience of his ongoing support for e-fairness.

MA: Boston's Mayoral Race

The race for Boston's first new mayor in 20 years has been narrowed down from twelve candidates to two. On November 5, John Connolly, a City Councilor-at-large from West Roxbury, will square off against Marty Walsh, a State Representative from Dorchester, to see who will be Boston's next mayor. In the primary election Walsh finished first with 18% (20,838 votes) and Connolly placed second with 17% (19,429 votes). The next candidate was Charlotte Golar Richie, the only female candidate in the race, with 14% (15,536 votes).

MA: New Cleanliness Standard for Restaurants

Earlier this month, the Joint Committee on Public Health reported favorably on Senate Bill 1103, an act related to cleanliness in restaurants and bars. The bill, filed by Senator James Timilty (D -- Walpole), requires the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to create regulations that would phase out the use of standing chemical water to clean utensils, plates, and beverage containers in every club, hotel, pub brewery, restaurant and tavern.

NY: Governor Cuomo Creates Tax Relief Commission

On October 2, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the formation of the New York State Tax Relief Commission which is designed to reduce the State's property and business taxes to provide relief to New York's homeowners and businesses. Notably, the Commission will be led by former political rivals to the Governor, former Governor George Pataki and former Comptroller Carl McCall. The Commission's membership also includes several representatives from New York's business community. These appointments signal the Commission's recommendations are likely to include ideas to reduce the tax burden on the business sector. The recommendations are due by December 6 for inclusion in the Governor's 2014 State of the State message. Senate leaders on both sides of the isle have come out in support of the Commission as they are also conducting a series of statewide hearings on the issue of cutting taxes for businesses.

WA: Proposed Ballot Initiative Irresponsibly Expands Access to Signature Gatherers

A growing bipartisan group of Washington citizens, grocers, retailers, community organizations and associations are opposing Washington Initiative Measure 517 (I-517), which would irresponsibly expand access and provide unusual protection to signature gatherers who collect signatures on private property. The ballot measure is the November 5 ballot.

Proponents claim that signature gatherers and petition signers are vulnerable to harassment and that I-517 offers necessary protection for those individuals. However, the measure is backed by Tim Eyman, an initiative promoter who is seeking to increase the profitability of businesses that conduct signature gathering. Unfortunately, I-517 would actually infringe on private property rights by taking away a storeowner's ability to regulate if, when, where and how signature gathering takes place on his or her property. Under I-517 signature gathering becomes a legally protected activity anywhere outside of any store including immediately outside the entrances and exits. It would establish a 25-foot protected bubble around a signature gatherer within which any type of interference in their activities is illegal and subject to punishment as a misdemeanor. Interference would include asking the signature gatherer to leave you alone if harassing you, asking him or her to move out your way if blocking you or expressing any type of disagreement with the initiative content.

ICSC members are working with the No on I-517 Coalition to oppose passage of this ballot initiative. To learn more or to get involved, visit their website at www.no517.org.



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