



Our view:

Grocers right to be concerned about tax

The initiative would prohibit taxes at every point of food sales, from production, processing, wholesale and retail, with the exception of meals served at restaurants.

Grocers are going on the offensive long before a predicted tax battle begins, and it's probably a good thing.

Last week the The Northwest Grocery Association filed the paperwork to petition for a ballot measure in 2018 to constitutionally bar taxes on food. The initiative would prohibit taxes at every point of food sales, from production, processing, wholesale and retail, with the exception of meals served at restaurants. It would not include alcoholic beverages, marijuana products or tobacco products.

According to the initiative's language, it would go beyond just banning a sales tax — it would prohibit “a gross receipts tax, commercial activity tax, value-added tax, excise tax, privilege tax, and any other similar tax on the sale of groceries.”

The association's action comes as public employee unions pursue placing a corporate sales tax on the ballot in 2018, a pared-down version of the ill-conceived Measure 97 gross receipts tax defeated in 2016. Grocers were a major opponent of Measure 97.

Under the proposed measure, the food industry would continue to pay corporate income tax, and the sales of other household goods and pet food still would be subject to taxes, The campaign will need to collect 117,578 signatures by July 2018 to win a place on the general election ballot the following November.

Joe Gilliam, the association's president, said the initiative's intent is “just protecting people's access to food and only food for human consumption.”

Gilliam is right, food is a necessity and shouldn't be taxed.

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