



City Of Markham

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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July 14, 2015

Cook County Board of Commissioners
118 North Clark
Suite 500
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Board Members:

As the Mayor of the City of Markham, I want to commend Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle for proposing an increase in the sales tax. The question is not, as Chicago Tribune shortsightedly insists, whether raising the sales tax is an appealing prospect. The question is whether doing so, difficult as that may be, is the right decision for Cook County and its residents.

The answer is yes.

Toni Preckwinkle has brought honesty and openness to County government. Yes, she campaigned on and repealed a portion of the sales tax several years ago – and did so because it was the right decision then. Once in office, she reduced government spending, including closing a number of positions, and resolved more than \$1.4 billion in budget deficits.

Unfortunately, pension shortfalls and ever-increasing legacy debt service payments drive up the cost of County government, regardless of retrenchment and increased efficiency. And some sources of budgeted revenue have not met expectations.

This classic double whammy, increasing costs and declining revenue, is all too familiar to those of us in local government positions.

The State of Illinois, teetering near paralysis, failed to act on the County's pension reform proposal. Support for increasing the property tax is non-existent. Thus the choice confronting President Preckwinkle is to raise the sales tax, thus allowing the County to pay real debt and close real funding shortfalls with real dollars, or engage in the kind of smoke-and-mirrors public financing so common today.

We should be grateful to President Preckwinkle for not taking the easy road. She has also committed to reducing the penny sales tax hike if the state approves the County's pension reform bill.

We must reject those who seek harmful delays in action or resort to name-calling. We must demand that those in Springfield show the kind of consistent willingness to tackle difficult fiscal issues the President has demonstrated.

Sincerely,

David Webb, Jr.
Mayor, City of Markham