



November 2017 City of Tucson Ballot Issues - Pros and Cons

Propositions 202 & 203 - The Future of Your Zoo

Proposition 202 is a citizen initiative to increase the sales tax by one tenth of one percent for ten years to make capital improvements to the Reid Park Zoo (the “Zoo”), acquire new animals, and fund field trips to the Zoo for K-12 students. (The current City tax rate is 2.5%; for a total sales tax of 8.6%. <http://www.sale-tax.com/TucsonAZ>. To see how this compares to other cities in Arizona: <http://www.sale-tax.com/Arizona>). Proposition 203 would make the necessary changes to the City Code to implement the changes. Both Propositions must be passed to effect this change.

Sample ballot can be found at: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf

Pros (in favor):

- It is estimated that this tax would raise \$8 to \$10 million per year and would cost each taxpayer from \$.60 to \$1.00 per month to fund the needed renovations to the Zoo. http://tucson.com/news/local/tucson-voters-may-decide-on-sales-tax-hike-to-fund/article_0a5ff4ba-73d4-514b-b552-253e22301815.html
<https://www.futureofyourzoo.com/facts-faqs/>
- The Zoo is 50 years old and management believes it is at a “critical juncture.” It has delayed capital improvements and fears losing its national accreditation and ability to house its animals. <https://www.futureofyourzoo.com/facts-faqs/>
- The funds will be restricted for use only for the Zoo. <https://www.futureofyourzoo.com/facts-faqs/>
- School children will get free field trips. <https://www.futureofyourzoo.com/facts-faqs/>
- The Zoo is good for the City. It attracts tourists. <http://www.wildcat.arizona.edu/article/2017/10/voters-to-decide-the-future-of-reid-park-zoo>
- The partnership between the University of Arizona and the Zoo is good for the University since the students can observe and participate in surgery on exotic animals. <http://www.wildcat.arizona.edu/article/2017/10/voters-to-decide-the-future-of-reid-park-zoo>

- The Zoo is the largest attended cultural attraction in Southern Arizona. The proposed improvements would put the Zoo on par with the San Diego Zoo. They would also address critical maintenance issues such as compromised sewer lines, outdated utilities, and outdated animal enclosures that are no longer adequate.
- Various letters at: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf

Cons (Opposed):

- Councilman Steve Kozachik, in whose ward the Zoo is located, said that there are other ways for the Zoo to get capital improvement funding, and he's in the process of discussing a nonresidential rate for admission with City Manager Mike Ortega, with all the added money going toward capital improvements. http://tucson.com/news/local/tucson-s-reid-park-zoo-to-push-for-sales-tax/article_75a01ea7-f407-5e8c-bbab-9e576d141475.html
- Similarly, Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild expressed reservations about the zoo's proposal. "We have also been planning for investment in our city park system overall, of which the zoo is one component. . . Going forward in a piecemeal manner is likely to be detrimental to funding our park system overall." http://tucson.com/news/local/tucson-s-reid-park-zoo-to-push-for-sales-tax/article_75a01ea7-f407-5e8c-bbab-9e576d141475.html
- The Zoo is not in a financial crisis or emergency according to John Dalton of the Pima County Republican Party, https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf
- The City does not need more taxes. <http://www.wildcat.arizona.edu/article/2017/10/voters-to-decide-the-future-of-reid-park-zoo>
- Voters may be confused because there are two propositions to pass this one initiative. <http://www.wildcat.arizona.edu/article/2017/10/voters-to-decide-the-future-of-reid-park-zoo>
- People buy tickets to go to the Zoo and make donations to the Zoo. The Zoo is planning to raise \$15 million in donations, in addition to the tax for capital improvements. <http://www.kgun9.com/news/local-news/animals-on-ballot-in-next-tucson-election>

Letters in opposition: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf

Annual Reports and Financial Statements can be found at (2016 Zoo financial statement not online): <https://reidparkzoo.org/about/2013-annual-report/>
<https://www.tucsonaz.gov/finance/comprehensive-annual-financial-reports-cafr>

Proposition 204 - Strong Start Tucson

Strong Start Tucson is a citizen initiative that provides for a half cent sales tax to fund pre-school scholarships for under-privileged children in Tucson. (The current City tax rate is 2.5%; for a total sales tax of 8.6%. <http://www.sale-tax.com/TucsonAZ> . To see how this compares to other cities in Arizona: <http://www.sale-tax.com/Arizona> .) There is no sunset provision for the sales tax. No more than 8% of the total annual fund may be used for administrative expenses.

A seven-person commission, appointed by the City Council, the membership of which shall include early childhood education providers, education advocates and experts, parents of school-age children and members of the business and non-profit communities, provided that at least two (2) commissioners shall be early-education experts and no more than two (2) commissioners shall be early-childhood education providers. The Commission's duties would include:

- Setting standards for what qualifies as a "high-quality" preschool;
- Developing eligibility requirements for the scholarships, with a sliding scale based on family income;
- Determining the financial aid reimbursement rates for the preschools; and
- Hiring and overseeing a nonprofit to manage the funds and scholarships.

Sample ballot can be found at: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf

Pros (In favor):

- According to research early childhood education increases third grade reading scores and high school graduation rates. Those who participate in "high-quality" preschool are, according to the experts, more likely to get good jobs, be satisfied in their marriages, and tend not to abuse drugs or end up incarcerated or receive public assistance. *Not All Tucson Education Advocates Support Proposed Sales Tax for Preschool Scholarship*, Arizona Daily Star, 9/23/2017 http://tucson.com/news/local/preschool-sales-tax-proposal-faces-opposition-from-tucson-education-advocates/article_bf7123b5-1a16-58d5-bd62-5246afdc376b.html. Increasing graduation rates decreases crime rates. *Early childhood education tied to better graduation rates*, Washington Examiner, 8/24/2008 <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/early-childhood-education-tied-to-better-graduation-rates/article/45397>
- There is not a sunset provision in this initiative because it will be needed in perpetuity.
- Although the tax is regressive, the average family will only pay \$3.00 per month, and since richer families buy more, they will pay more. https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/strongstarttucson/pages/17/attachments/original/1507053532/15_reasons_to_Vote_YES_on_prop_204.pdf?1507053532

- The scholarships level the playing field between poor and rich children.
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/strongstartucson/pages/17/attachments/original/1507053532/15_reasons_to_Vote_YES_on_prop_204.pdf?1507053532
- The fund does not put a financial burden on the City because it provides in the legislation that it pay for itself.
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/strongstartucson/pages/17/attachments/original/1507053532/15_reasons_to_Vote_YES_on_prop_204.pdf?1507053532
- The non-profit that administers the fund will be subject to intensive audit and reporting requirements. *Not All Tucson Education Advocates Support Proposed Sales Tax for Preschool Scholarship*, Arizona Daily Star, 9/23/2017
http://tucson.com/news/local/preschool-sales-tax-proposal-faces-opposition-from-tucson-education-advocates/article_bf7123b5-1a16-58d5-bd62-5246afdc376b.html

Letters in favor: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf

Cons (Opposed):

- Sales tax is regressive and puts the highest burden on those it is designed to help.
- There is no sunset date in the ballot initiative.
- All of the decisions regarding the initiative are made by the Commission, which includes no more than two early childhood educators and as few as two early childhood experts. Members of the business community on the Commission could have conflicts of interest. Luke Knipe, former City Council staff member and Democratic political operative in *Not All Tucson Education Advocates Support Proposed Sales Tax for Preschool Scholarship*, Arizona Daily Star, 9/23/2017 http://tucson.com/news/local/preschool-sales-tax-proposal-faces-opposition-from-tucson-education-advocates/article_bf7123b5-1a16-58d5-bd62-5246afdc376b.html
- The non-profit that administers the fund will not be subject to open records laws that government entities are subject to, making it difficult for the public to evaluate the return on investment. *Not All Tucson Education Advocates Support Proposed Sales Tax for Preschool Scholarship*, Arizona Daily Star, 9/23/2017
http://tucson.com/news/local/preschool-sales-tax-proposal-faces-opposition-from-tucson-education-advocates/article_bf7123b5-1a16-58d5-bd62-5246afdc376b.html
- Program would only be for students in Tucson, but some students live in school districts including areas both inside and outside of Tucson. For example, 30% of Sunnyside students live outside of Tucson and would not be eligible for the scholarships. This sets up inequities in certain school districts. *Not All Tucson Education Advocates Support Proposed Sales Tax for Preschool Scholarship*, Arizona Daily Star, 9/23/2017

http://tucson.com/news/local/preschool-sales-tax-proposal-faces-opposition-from-tucson-education-advocates/article_bf7123b5-1a16-58d5-bd62-5246afdc376b.html

- Some school districts have bonds and overrides on the ballot that may be at risk with the tax increase for pre-school also on the ballot at the same time. *Not All Tucson Education Advocates Support Proposed Sales Tax for Preschool Scholarship*, Arizona Daily Star, 9/23/2017 http://tucson.com/news/local/preschool-sales-tax-proposal-faces-opposition-from-tucson-education-advocates/article_bf7123b5-1a16-58d5-bd62-5246afdc376b.html

Letters opposed: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf

Proposition 406 - Proposal to Increase the Salaries of the Mayor and City Council Members

This proposition would increase the salary of the Mayor from \$3500 per month (\$42,000 annually) to \$5775 (\$69,300 annually) and City Council Members from \$2000 per month (\$24,000 annually) to \$3300 (\$39,600 annually). This is a 65% increase. The last salary increase was in 1999. The recommendation was made by an independent commission created under the City Charter, *The Citizens' Commission on Public Service and Compensation*. The recommendation by the Commission is required to go on the ballot.

Pros (in favor):

- Even with the salary increase Tucson Council Members would be receiving less than the average salary of council members in cities the size of Tucson per the Bureau of Labor Statistics:
- “The current salaries for Mayor and Council are \$3,500 and \$2,000 per month respectively. We still think of Mayor and Council as part-time jobs, but we aren’t a small town anymore and haven’t been for a long time. We oversee a \$1.43 billion budget and are making decisions about city functions from water to public safety. If you think about what we do as a full-time, 40 hour a week job, that is roughly \$12.50 per hour for a council member. The proposal would increase the salaries to \$5,775 and \$3,300 per month. That may seem a steep hike, but council salaries haven’t been increased since 1999. A councilmember’s salary would be \$20.62 an hour, still below the average for the city of Tucson (\$21.42, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics).” Newsletter from Councilman Paul Cunningham <https://www.facebook.com/notes/paul-cunningham/pauls-note/1595536637159592/>
- Current salary is a barrier to certain persons running for these offices, such as women, under-represented communities, and working heads of households. A salary increase could increase diversity on the Council.

"I think the current pay for mayor and council is a barrier for women, under-represented communities and working heads of households to run for office. It's unfortunate because we need diverse and representative voices on the City Council and in every level of government." Vice Mayor Regina Romero, AZ Daily Star, 6 Jul 2017 http://tucson.com/news/local/tucson-voters-to-decide-on-raises-for-mayor-and-city/article_9d68f58f-e1e1-5caf-a00f-c728593d311d.html

- These are essentially full-time jobs and should be compensated as such. Increased compensation would also encourage more candidates to run for office. <http://tucsonchamber.org/government-affairs-alert/yes-to-better-pay-for-public-servants/>

Letters in support: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/CIY_Final_Proof.pdf

Cons (Opposed):

- There are other benefits that City Council Members get, like a pension after serving for five years and a city vehicle, that should be factored into their compensation.
- Facebook comments indicate that some members of the public believe pay raises should not be forthcoming based upon performance and conditions in City. Further that they knew the salary when they ran and knew this was a part-time job. http://tucson.com/news/local/tucson-voters-to-decide-on-raises-for-mayor-and-city/article_9d68f58f-e1e1-5caf-a00f-c728593d311d.html
- Raises for City Employees for this year have not been decided. \$2.6 million has been set aside for distribution to certain employees for a one-time distribution. Last year 4,000 employees got a \$1,000 bonus, which was not considered a raise. Due to financial constraints, City Manager Michael Ortega is opting to wait three months before deciding whether to spend \$2.6 million that has been set aside this year for a "one-time" distribution to select employees. This suggest that the City is not in a position to afford even more pay increases. http://tucson.com/news/local/tucson-voters-to-decide-on-raises-for-mayor-and-city/article_9d68f58f-e1e1-5caf-a00f-c728593d311d.html

No letters were filed with the City in opposition.



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