



News Release

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Parking Group Launches Aggressive Public Education Campaign to Fight Tax Proposal

Chicago's tax rate is already second highest in the nation

Just hours after Mayor Daley announced he was considering an increase to taxes on downtown parking facilities in the 2009 city budget, a parking industry trade group that represents the owners, operators and workers of Chicago's parking industry announced an aggressive educational campaign to fight the harmful tax proposal. Chicago already taxes parking at a higher rate than any other city in the nation, except Pittsburgh.

“The public needs to know how damaging this would be to the city's economy, Aldermen need to learn about the workers in each of their wards who will be hardest hit, and the Mayor needs to understand that a parking tax would cost the city revenue instead of create revenue,” said Michael Prussian, co-chairman of the Parking Industry Labor Management Committee. “Nothing good can come from this tax proposal.”

The campaign announced today will include pamphlets handed to every downtown parking lot user starting first thing Tuesday morning. An aggressive phone call strategy is also part of the campaign, and the pamphlets will include a list of phone numbers for each Alderman. The campaign will include paid advertising, events and other grassroots outreach and coalition building as necessary.

Earlier this year when Cook County considered a similar tax, the coalition to fight it included many other major business groups. “We were successful in our educational campaign when the County considered the issue, and the City also must realize the damage to the economy when taxes here are already the second highest in the country,” said Prussian. “It is an issue for restaurants, theatres, retail shops and other businesses downtown who fear the loss of a key commuter customer base.”

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“We understand that the city is facing a difficult budget situation. But when workers find it too expensive to commute to the city, businesses will move out to the suburbs. When businesses and their employees move elsewhere, the City will suffer,” Prussian continued.

“I believe this is also an issue for working families,” said John Coli, head of the Teamsters Joint council 25, with 5,000 members who work in parking facilities. “With sky high gas prices, everyone who can take public transportation already does so. This proposed tax – at an astounding 33% -- is another slap in the face to workers who must use their car for their business. It is a tax on people who take night classes at the many colleges downtown. It harms working families who can’t afford to live close to public transportation, or who have to work very late. Aldermen must recognize that three quarters of downtown parkers live and work in the county, and drive because they must.”

Every city with a thriving downtown, including New York, San Francisco, Miami and others, have lower tax rates than Chicago. The only city in the nation with a higher downtown parking tax rate is Pittsburgh, whose downtown retail and restaurant businesses were severely damaged by the increased parking tax.

“The city can’t afford to choke downtown businesses or workers any more than they already have been squeezed,” said Prussian. “This tax will harm the city, and we need to do whatever we can to make sure it doesn’t happen.”

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