

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## FIVE SHENANDOAH COUNTY GROUPS ANNOUNCE SUPPORT FOR MEALS TAX INITIATIVE

Firefighters, Teachers, Farmers, Businesspeople, Parents Urge “Yes” Vote.

Contact:



Dennis Dysart  
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Darryl Bowers  
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Dan Walsh  
(PASS)

**WOODSTOCK** – Today, five groups representing very distinct interests came together to announce their support for Shenandoah County adopting a meals tax. Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce, Shenandoah County Education Association, Shenandoah County Farm Bureau, Shenandoah Fire and Rescue Association, and Parents’ Alliance for Strong Schools all announced their support for the initiative and urged their fellow Shenandoah County citizens to vote “yes” on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

“The meals tax is a common-sense initiative that will allow the county government to raise additional revenue without having to raise real estate or property taxes,” said Farm Bureau President Justin Pence. “In addition, more than any other tax our county might consider, it will be paid in significant part by visitors to our county.

If adopted by county voters, the initiative would impose a 4% tax on prepared meals sold by restaurants, eateries and stores in the unincorporated parts of the county. The tax would not apply to meals sold in the towns, as restaurants within town borders collect town meals taxes. The revenue from the new tax would be earmarked for Capital Improvement Projects related to public safety and education.

“Shenandoah County fire companies responded to 190 incidents on I-81 in 2018,” said SFRA Spokesman Darryl Bowers. “That costs our county and our fire companies real money. As the President of the Toms Brook Vol. Fire Department, I look at I 81 travelers dining in the 5 eateries within the truck stops at the Toms Brook exit and I feel strongly that they should contribute to our cost of providing those services.” Bowers added, “We have real needs – we have equipment that was never funded by taxpayers. Volunteers raise the money through fundraisers, but those fundraisers are no longer working.”

Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) are defined as purchases of durable goods that cost more than \$5,000, and which are used over five years or more.

“SCPS’ CIP budget has been underfunded for years,” said PASS President Dan Walsh. “The revenue from the meals tax would allow SCPS to replace additional buses, security systems, roofs and other capital goods, while also providing some badly needed capital funds to our first responders.”

“An expanded and diversified tax base will be necessary to support economic development initiatives in Shenandoah County, including infrastructure investments and workforce development,” said Dennis Dysart, Chairman of the Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. “In addition, a high-quality public education system and public safety services are essential to the businesses in our community. The meals tax furthers all of these goals.”

“We urge voters to learn more about this initiative before voting on it,” said Walsh. “There is so much misinformation circulating about it. People are suggesting that it would apply to meals served in the towns, or that it would raise the cost of a meal by 15-20% -- neither of these is true. We believe that if voters take the time to learn about this issue, they will agree that it is a long-overdue common-sense initiative.”

Voters can learn more about the initiative at <http://www.shenandoahcountychamber.com/Action-Alerts>

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