

# **VRLTA Kitchen Cabinet:**

*Restaurant Advocacy Workshop*





# Politics Care About **YOU**

- Issues of government authority rarely break cleanly
- Many of the policy decisions that affect your business are made at the local level by officials that are your friends and neighbors
- Advocating directly at the local level is one of the best political skill sets to develop

# State-Level Support

Our advocacy on a range of topics helps shore up your business:

- Material and Container Bans
- Tipped Wage Credit
- Natural Gas Availability
- And Much More!





## Restaurant Land Use

- Local governments decide where a restaurant goes and where it doesn't
- Identifying re-zoning opportunities that could boost the industry locally is important
- These issues are often decided by the people in the room at the time, make sure to be one!



# Workforce Development

- Local governments can use their power of the purse to help our industries thrive and help locals find gainful employment
- Programs can be tailored to help just about anyone
- But local officials can't come up with a plan without industry help

# Meals Taxes

- One of the most pernicious policy discussions for the restaurant industry popping up today
- Not isolated to one type of locality or one type of local government funding gap
- One of the most direct ways a local government can put their thumb onto the scale of business
- This course will help you learn the skills you need to fight meals taxes, but these skills can be used broadly at the local level to plan effective advocacy no matter what the issue...



# The Food Tax Threat:

- Local Governments have limited taxing authority
- One “new” option they have is to enact a local food tax, usually called a meals tax.
- Under state law, enacting a food tax locally no longer requires voter approval and can be enacted with a simple vote of the local governing body.

**Local governments across the Commonwealth are moving to enact this tax.**



# The Food Tax Threat:

## *Local Governments Want More Money*

- Local governments are bigger than ever
- The flood of free federal cash from Covid related programs has dried up, busting local budgets
- Spending control is low on the priority list
- Property taxes are already very controversial

**For many local governments, a new food tax has become the solution**

# Messaging:

What IS a “Meals Tax,” and How Do We Frame It?



VIRGINIA  
RESTAURANT • LODGING • TRAVEL  
ASSOCIATION





# It's NOT Just a “Meals Tax”...

- Tax on all restaurant meals
- Tax on other ready-to-eat food and beverages served including:
  - Ready to eat foods (grocery store chicken, hotbars, etc.)
  - Food at entertainment and sports venues
  - Food trucks
  - Fundraisers
  - Catering Companies
- Up to **6% on top** of existing sales tax

**...It's a FOOD Tax**



# Meals Tax Mythbusting:

## ***Myth:***

- ✓ Voluntary, like a “sin tax”
- ✓ Tax paid by outsiders
- ✓ Keeps other taxes down (property)
- ✓ Used to fund schools, other popular projects

## ***Fact:***

- ✓ Regressive, falling mainly on middle and low income families with full schedules
- ✓ 70% paid by local residents\*
- ✓ No guarantee new funds will be used to keep other taxes down
- ✓ Money is fungible. No guarantee where it will be spent.



# Meals Tax Mythbusting:

- It's not a meals tax, It's a **FOOD TAX**.
- It's not paid by outsiders and travelers, it's paid by our **RESIDENTS AND TAXPAYERS**.
- It **WON'T** be used to reduce property or any other taxes.
- It **TARGETS A SINGLE INDUSTRY** and all our workers
- It's a tax that voters across the Commonwealth have **REJECTED** over and over again at the ballot box.

# What You'll Need:

- Leadership Team
- Spokespersons
- Coalition of stakeholders
- Activists
- Active intel
- Campaign Plan
- Website, social media accounts
- Collateral materials
- Lists
- Timeline
- Budget
- Resources to fund it





# Prep Your Campaign

## *Pay Attention*

- Gather Intelligence regularly, consistently
- Network with local leaders, council members
- Monitor local government budgets & look for holes
- Monitor statements by local leaders, governments
- Look for actions in nearby jurisdictions
- Attend council meetings
- Meet regularly with coalition members



# Prep Your Campaign

## *Learn the Process*

- Available on your local government website
- Legislative calendar and agendas
- Required advertising and public hearings
- Comment periods
- Rules for how to testify or comment

**All should be available either online or via verbal requests for information**

## READ THIS. YOU ARE ABOUT TO BE TAXED, AGAIN!



Your county board is pushing a new **FOOD TAX**, despite voters rejecting it twice.

### Tell them NO!

This tax would directly impact affordability of food in our county.  
And, it would hit middle and lower income households hardest.

Go to [www.stopthefoodtax.com](http://www.stopthefoodtax.com) and sign up to fight the food tax...again!



**If the Fairfax Food Tax passes, you'll pay up to 12% more for these items and many others including...**

All prepared meals and beverages, not just restaurants.

All ready-to-eat prepared foods sold in the county, by anybody, to anybody.

Fast food, fast casual, formal dining, informal dining. Salad and sandwiches in convenience stores.

"Carry-out" food, "to-go" orders and food truck purchases.

Catered meals.

Concessions at sporting events and movie theaters (some exceptions).

All prepared and ready-to-eat food at the grocery store.

Beer, wine and food consumed at breweries and wineries.

Home delivery of all food and beverages, including pizza and burgers.

The list goes on.



**Tell your Supervisor to vote NO  
on the FOOD TAX!**

Paid for by Fairfax Families Against the Food Tax

# Prep Your Campaign

## *Recruit Supports and Activists*

- **Leadership Coalition**  
Stakeholders, directly impacted, funders, recruiters
- **Spokespersons**  
Designated to speak to the public, media
- **Activists**  
Servers, employees, small stores and independents
- **At-Large Supporters**  
Business community, non-profits, churches, community groups



## In-Person Meetings are Key

- Ask for direct meetings between your elected officials and a delegation of coalition leaders, supporters
- Press for no tax and avoid discussion of tax rate
- Get promises from officeholders to consult again prior to any action
- Rate officeholder's position on the tax on a scale of one (in support of tax) to five (in opposition to tax)
- Assign coalition partners to individual officeholders as primary contact, responsibility
- Distribute collateral materials
- Implement events, ongoing media contact, ongoing lobbying

# Plan & Launch Your Campaign:

- I. Build your Coalition**
  - Stakeholders
  - Ready to eat food vendors
  - Allies
- II. Assemble Contact Lists**
  - Coalition
  - Stakeholders
  - Allies
  - Grassroots leaders
  - Elected officials
  - Key contacts and staff
- III. Draft a master calendar**
  - Official dates
  - Community Events
- IV. File a Committee**
  - 501(c)4
- V. Draft Campaign Budget**
- VI. Raise Funds!!!**
- VII. Collateral + Website Launch**
- VIII. Identify Coalition Leaders**
  - Assign responsibilities (Manager, Media contact, Webmaster, etc.)
- IX. Build Awareness**
  - Traditional Media (print, radio, television)
  - Social media
  - Online grassroots organizing  
***VRLTA can support***
  - Personalities
  - Local forums, message boards, groups
  - Opposition groups/individuals
  - Events

# Collateral & Website Content

FAIRFAX FAMILIES AGAINST THE MEALS TAX

**VOTE NO MEALS TAX**

*It's NOT a meals tax - it's a FOOD tax.*

What is the so-called "meals tax"? It's not just a tax on restaurant meals. It goes way beyond that. It's a new 4% tax on all prepared foods, meals, and beverages served with meals in Fairfax County. It's on top of the existing 6% state sales tax, meaning that, **if this tax passes, you will pay a total of 10% tax on all meals and prepared foods you buy in Fairfax County.**

**Who will be taxed?**

**Everyone!** It's expected to cost tax payers million per year.

**You can help defeat it!**

On November 8th, look for the **MEALS TAX** question on the ballot and vote **NO**.

[www.stopthefoodtax.com](http://www.stopthefoodtax.com)

**VOTE NO MEALS TAX**

FAIRFAX FAMILIES AGAINST THE MEALS TAX  
[www.stopthefoodtax.com](http://www.stopthefoodtax.com)

**VOTE NO FOOD TAX**

HISTORY NEWS CONTACT US

Why is there a **NEW FOOD TAX OF UP TO 6%** in the county?

Add that to the 6% sales tax and you're looking at a **12% TAX** on all prepared foods.

Last time they tried to do this you had the right to vote on it.

Now they're forcing it through without giving you a choice.

**HERE COMES THE FOOD TAX!**

Your county board is trying to enact a new tax on food even though voters in Fairfax County have rejected it twice at the polls. **This time, the board doesn't need your permission and can pass it at any regular meeting.**

**NO VOTER APPROVAL IS NEEDED.**

**Tell them NO!**

It's time to cut spending. Call your supervisor at \*\*\*\*\* and go to [www.domainname.com](http://www.domainname.com) and sign up to fight the food tax...again!

**If the Fairfax Food Tax passes, you'll pay up to 12% more for these items and many others including...**

|                                                                             |                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All restaurant meals and beverages.                                         | Concessions at sporting events and movie theaters (some exceptions).  |
| All ready-to-eat prepared foods sold in the county, by anybody, to anybody. | Catered meals.                                                        |
| Fast food, fast casual, formal dining, informal dining.                     | All prepared and ready-to-eat food at the grocery store.              |
| Salad and sandwiches in convenience stores.                                 | Home delivery of all food and beverages, including pizza and burgers. |
| "Carry-out" food and "to-go" orders.                                        | The list goes on.                                                     |
| Food trucks.                                                                |                                                                       |

**Tell your Supervisor to vote NO on the FOOD TAX!**

**Is it time we had "the talk"...**

**...with the Fairfax County Board?**

**STOP ASKING!**

We've told you twice at the polls that we don't want a food tax in our county.

But you keep coming back, keep asking.

But **this time, they don't need our permission.** They can enact a food tax with a simple vote of the board at a regular meeting.

**So what's on the line this time?**

It's a not just a meals tax on restaurants, it's a **FOOD TAX** on all prepared and ready to eat foods sold in the county.

How much? Up to 6% on top of the 6% you already pay in sales tax meaning your food bill could be up to 12% higher just for taxes.

**Who will be taxed?**

Everyone! It's expected to cost taxpayers \$33 million dollars a year for every 1% of tax.

You can help defeat it.

Go to the website, call your supervisor, **tell them vote NO** on the food tax.



## Implementation Summary

- In person direct meetings with elected officials
- Hold visibility raising events and demonstrations
- Piggyback on existing functions and events
- Testify at hearings
- Submit written and video public comments
- Distribute collateral materials liberally
- **BE RELENTLESS! MAKE NOISE!**

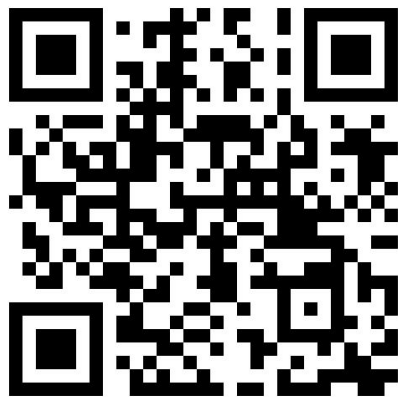
# Campaign Checklist:

- ☐ Build your coalition
- ☐ Make Assignments
- ☐ Gather intel
- ☐ Assemble lists
- ☐ Develop master calendar
- ☐ Set up website with call-to-action capabilities
- ☐ Set up multiple in person meetings with elected officials
- ☐ Set up social platform accounts
- ☐ Issue press release announcing group and leaders
- ☐ Order and distribute materials
- ☐ Monitor council proceedings for action and sign up to speak
- ☐ Hold demonstrations, lobby days
- ☐ Continually review, revise, renew the campaign until the threat is past

# VRLTA is Here to Help

VRLTA is available to assist with the development of your campaign.

We have prepress art for collateral materials, website, and social media call to action tools.



Visit our website for additional resources, downloads, and support!



# Get VRLTA Certified!



Earn your VRLTA Local Advocacy Certification



# Thank You!

