

The other side of the story...

Lodging Tax is a Barometer

This general election is important. Our votes will have long lasting effects.

Some candidates for office have unspoken agendas. Some are focused on building their own businesses and personal legacies. Others pledge to build government housing and buy buses because they believe it is good politics.

Once elected, it's tough to remain strong and do what you said. It's too easy to forget what you promised and get sucked into the local group-think mindset. Once in office, many will vote to get along and get reelected.

Hopefully, out of nowhere someone will stand up for wildlife and **defend our wild places**. Hopefully a hero will emerge to challenge the notion that 'If we are not filling every hotel bed and not ringing every cash register every day then we are a community withering away.'

One ballot item is especially important. The Lodging Tax is what it says it is — a tax on tourists to **generate more tourism**. Ignore all the falderal about the 40% offsetting impacts of tourism. That's smoke and mirrors deception.

The Lodging Tax is a litmus test for where we stand as a community. What is our appetite for self-destruction? Do we want even more over-crowding and traffic jams? Or is it better to pause so we can see the impact of the yet un-built hotels that are already approved and in the pipeline.

If you like numbers, here's a scary one. At the current rate of growth, **visitation will double** to 8 million a year by 2026. And you thought 4.1 million made Jackson seem crowded?

Lodging tax advocates say don't worry. We are marketing a sustainable Jackson and asking people to keep Wyoming wild. That's wishful thinking. Some visitors can't even use the toilet properly or find a garbage can.

Tax promoters claim tax money is being used to **help small local events**. Of the \$7.3M collected last year, a mere \$5k went to Special Olympics and \$3k to the Eco-Fair. Yawn.

But let's put away the pie charts for a moment. Forget the numbers and the statistical spin. Let's keep this as simple as it really is.

*No on the tax
YES to livability*

Our economy is roaring. The only time this tax has ever been voted in is when we were in the doldrums. It may have helped us out of the 2008 recession, but that was a decade ago. We have always mothballed the tax once recovery was made. We are way beyond recovery today. The Chamber's **greed is showing** with their massive and very expensive pro-Tax ad campaign.

It's a matter of perspective. Recent arrivals likely don't recognize the breakneck pace we are on. But those of us who have been around a while don't recognize Jackson Hole anymore.

A lot rides on this lodging tax vote. A YES means you want to push ahead recklessly. You will be turning up the heat on an already over-heated economy.

A vote NO means you value quality of life and your children's future more than fast buck.

Let's revisit this tax in two years. It's wiser to **turn down the heat** now by voting **NO**.