

May 11, 2018

**Re: Petition opposing the Meals Tax increase**

Dear Mayor Silberberg and Members of City Council,

Following is a petition, signed by **over 340** businesses and individuals, opposing the pending Meals Tax increase, which is both damaging and discriminatory. We continue to get new signatures, so there will be an updated version once the petition is closed.

You have absorbed much information and feedback throughout this process, so allow us to leave you with one final thought: The average net profit margin for a restaurant is 4%. With this increased Meals Tax, the City of Alexandria will profit more from restaurants' hard work than the owners and employees themselves. This is difficult to swallow – and is a severe disincentive to new and growing businesses.

Sincerely,  
Friends of Alexandria Restaurants

Begin Petition

-----

Dear Mayor and Members of Alexandria City Council,

I support City Council enacting immediate changes to reduce the discriminatory tax burden on restaurants. I recognize that local restaurants are the backbone of our community, employing citizens from all walks of life, improving streetscapes, and adding to the attractiveness and vibrancy of the City. Restaurants should not be targeted, distinct from every other business, as a special source for City revenue.

Expanding affordable housing is a worthy goal, but there are ways to do so without new taxes – and there are ways to raise tax revenue that do not unduly burden a single industry. Further, the meals tax disproportionately hits low income families who spend a larger percentage of their budget on meals. It also leaves restaurateurs with less money to hire employees and grow their businesses.

As such, I urge City Council to immediately:

**1. REPEAL THE RECENT 1% MEALS TAX INCREASE.** This increase makes Alexandria the most expensive dining destination in the DMV region, with a combined meals and sales tax of 11%.

**2. PROVIDE A 3% REBATE ON ALL MEALS TAX REVENUES COLLECTED BY RESTAURANTS AND PASSED THROUGH TO THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA.**

Restaurants currently pay credit card fees in order to collect taxes for the City.

**3. REDUCE THE PENALTY FOR LATE PAYMENT OF MEALS TAX TO THE CITY AND INTRODUCE A REASONABLE GRACE PERIOD BEFORE A PENALTY IS IMPOSED.** Today, restaurants immediately pay an egregious 10% late penalty.

**4. HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING BEFORE ANY TAX INCREASE IS CONSIDERED AND AGAIN AFTER THE ADD/DELETE PROCESS (PRIOR TO ADOPTING ANY BUDGET OR ORDINANCE).** The current process provides inadequate notice to affected parties and no clear means for recourse.

By making these changes, you will send a signal that Alexandria is a place where new businesses should locate, existing businesses should grow, and diners should visit.

**Signing Restaurants & Restaurant Groups (64):**

Al's Steak House  
Alexandria Pastry Shop  
Alexandria Restaurant Partners  
Bastille Brasserie & Bar  
bilbo baggins restaurant  
Billy Martin's Tavern, LLC  
Bon Vivant Cafe  
BRUT Champagne and Wine Bar  
Caphe Banh Mi / Sunday in Saigon  
Carlyle Club  
Chadwicks Restaurant  
Cheesetique  
Chef Geoff's / Lia's / Cafe Deluxe / Tortilla Coast  
Clyde's at Mark Center  
Del Ray Café  
Del Ray Pizzeria  
Delia's Restaurants  
Dolci Gelati  
Glory Days Grill  
GRAPE + BEAN  
Great American Restaurants  
Hank's Oyster Bar/Hank's Pasta Bar/JL Restaurant Group  
Hard Times Cafe  
HomeGrown Restaurant Group  
Il Porto Ristorante  
JL Restaurant Group  
King Street Blues

La Casa Restaurant  
La Fromagerie  
Laporta's Restaurant  
Lavender Moon Cupcakery  
Live Oak Restaurant  
Lost Dog Cafe  
Magnolia's on King  
Mason Social  
Mason Social / Urbano 116 / Augie's  
Meggrolls  
Mia's Italian Kitchen  
Neighborhood Restaurant Group  
Pizzeria Paradiso  
Pork Barrel BBQ  
Portner Brewhouse  
Potomac Restaurants  
Ramparts  
Restaurant Eve / Eamonn's / PX / Society Fair / Hummingbird  
Rock It Grill  
Rocklands Barbeque and Grilling Company  
RTs Restaurant  
Snackbar / Kaizen Tavern  
Sonoma Cellar  
Southside 815 / Northside10  
St Elmo's Coffee Pub / Cafe Pizzaiolo / Market to Market  
Starbucks - Hilton Old Town  
Stomping Ground  
Sweet Fire Donna's  
Swing's Coffee Roasters  
T.J. Stone's  
Taqueria Poblano  
Tequila & Taco  
The Dairy Godmother  
The Wharf / The Warehouse  
Theismann's Restaurant  
Union Street Public House  
Vermilion

**Signing Hotels (5):**

Courtyard Alexandria Pentagon South  
Embassy suites  
Hilton Alexandria Old Town  
Hiltons of Alexandria  
the alexandrian

### **Signing Associations (3):**

Alexandria Chamber of Commerce  
Del Ray Business Association  
Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington

### **Signing Businesses (54):**

2K consulting / PawsGo  
A2L Consulting  
Absolute Massage Therapy  
Addx Corporation  
Alexandria Toyota  
Barbara P Beach, Esq.  
Barre-bie Shop  
Bellevue Medical Partners  
Bishop Boutique  
Blueprint Chocolatiers  
Cc:External Affairs Inc.  
Del Ray CPA  
Digital Beans Inc.  
Euro USA  
fibre space  
FreedomWorks  
GEICO NOVA Local Office  
GOSSYP  
Grant Thornton  
Grey Owl Capital Mgmt / Cheesetique  
Istrico Productions  
Kinneman Insurance  
Kitchen Detail  
Lambent PR LLC  
Local Motion Project / Local Motion Studio  
Mark R Yoo Architect PLLC  
McEneaney Associates  
Omo Salon and Spa  
OnMessage Inc  
Parker-Gray Pediatric Dental Care  
Periwinkle on Columbus  
Photo/Louise Kraffy  
Pinney Davenport Nutrition  
PinUp Preserves, LLC  
Potomac riverboat company  
Rainbow Rock Band  
Red Barn Mercantile / Penny Post  
Richard Griffin Coaching, Heartwind, Inc.

RJT Financial Services, Inc  
Rodan + Fields  
Salon deZEN  
SCL Consulting LLC  
She's Unique  
The Cookery  
The Hour  
The Shoe Hive / The Hive  
The UPS Store Del Ray  
The Zebra Press  
Ticket to Ride Travel  
Today's Cargo  
TorchLight Hire  
Twist Boutique  
Wholistic Hound Academy  
William J. McCarthy and Associates, Inc

**Signing Individuals (156):**

Eric Brugel  
Kay Parkerson  
Dora Adamopoulos  
Paul Anderson  
Anita Anderson  
Javier Barco  
Margaret Barton  
Gins Baum  
Alice Beiro  
Mike Bell  
Nancy Belmont  
Mara Benner  
Borja Bernardo  
Wil Biddle  
Jacqueline Boltz  
Miranda Bond  
Kevin Born  
Adam Bortnick  
Renee Boudreau  
Lynton Bragg  
Cynthia Bragg  
Aneta Brocato  
Susan Brock  
Joe Bullis  
James Butler  
Tara Cain  
Adam Calabrese

Yvonne Callahan  
Michael Cannon  
Jean Card  
Alfonso Carnucci  
Suzanne Cooper  
Mary Crane  
Edward Crane  
Beth Dahl  
Michael Day  
David Diquollo  
Tania Donovan  
Ann Dorman  
Anne Dutilh  
Sharon Edwards  
Amy Eggers  
John Eick  
Ginette Eldredge  
Izabela Elias  
Christen English  
Mary Erber  
Stephen Erber  
Rose Esposito  
Jennifer Ferrara  
Thomas Ferraro  
Ben Flood  
Mark Fogle  
Caroline Fowler  
Melinda Glazer  
Caroline Goree  
Kara Gorski  
Aaron Gorski  
Molly Groom  
Lilly Harris  
Justin Harrison  
Terri Hauser  
Amanda Hayes  
Chris Hayes  
Marina Herrera  
Miles Holtzman  
Churchill Hooff  
Wayne Hulehan  
Graham Inge  
Ellen (Missy) Jenkins  
Alan Justice  
Paul Jost  
Joseph Kasper

Tom Kelly  
Christopher Kinard  
Robert Kingsbury  
Alexa Kulpa  
Dana Kunkel  
Megan Langley  
Melissa Lasalle  
Kent Lassman  
Kathryn Lehman  
Sean Lenehan  
Maria Lepage  
Sally Levy  
Jennifer Lisaius  
Elle Litwinetz  
Casey Lowe  
Denny Lyon  
Denny Lyon  
Sarah Mahoney  
Alison Manson  
Litzzy Manzanares  
Ian Mcgrath  
John Mcmanus  
Mitchell Miles  
Maxine Miller  
Ed Miskowski  
Amanda Miskowski  
Kerry Mitchell  
Sandy Modell  
Samantha Mogul  
Natalia Munoz  
Kaitlyn Murphy  
Lindsay Nelson  
Christena Nielsen  
Eleanor O'Connor  
Lizcet Ochoa  
Kevin Pace  
Nicholas Papadopoulos  
Jennifer Pappas  
Sarah Pearson  
Lesley Phillips  
Claire Portolese  
Patricia Potter  
Sarah Potts  
Cathy Puskar  
Richard Rahn  
Vivian Ramirez

Carroll Reid  
Gayle Reuter  
Michael Rice  
Sally Richards  
Michael Sade  
Amit Saluja  
Jordan Schriver  
Maureen Schweers  
Kevin Schweers  
Constance Shea  
Divya Shenoy  
Amy Shopkorn  
David Silverman  
Tod Sirois  
Anthony Smith  
Tim Smith  
Katie Stanley  
Judith Swedek  
Patrick Sweeney  
Kristine Telford  
Erik Telford  
Laura Teresinski  
Nina Tisara  
John Turcotte  
Maryann Veitch  
Alex Velez  
Barbara Wade  
Jen Walker  
Ellen "Sissy" Walker  
Derek Walker  
Natalia Walsh  
Courtney Wheeler  
Allen Wolf  
Kenneth Wolfe  
Megan Worley  
Karen Wykle  
Elliot Young  
Elisa Hensz  
Therese Guerette  
Holly Sasso  
Leslie Staples  
Jomarie Hoholik  
Melissa Patel  
Carolyn Winters  
Jack Rodgers  
Lawrence Grey

Stephanie Kapsis  
Josh Flynn  
Barbara Deathe  
Sheila Foote

**Petition Comments:**

<p>Adding this on top of the existing difficulties businesses face is unfair, as well as poor planning Alexandria is already expensive and increasing the taxes would make the dining experiences in Alexandria further from being affordable to average income earners.</p>
<p>Alexandria should also require that no tax increase may take effect unless approved by referendum.</p>
<p>Alexandria should seek to be the region's lowest tax destination, not the highest. If Affordable Housing is our new priority, then the city should cut other programs to pay for it. Have discipline.</p>
<p>an increase in meal tax would be devastating for City of Alexandria restaurants. It has been already difficult to compete with NHB, The Wharf and Fairfax county restaurants. An increase in meal tax will make it even more difficult</p>
<p>As a 15-year Alexandria resident, I'm increasingly perplexed by our Council's inability to work within the constraints of their own budget without treating local restaurants as an emergency revenue stream. I'm galled by recent remarks made by certain council members, particularly Mr. Bailey, indicating he is apathetic to the needs of Alexandria's workforce, has no regard for those who weren't born and bred in the City, and possesses little understanding of how individual economic decisions are made. Finally, I'm infuriated at the stealthy tactics that were employed to implement this tax. This tax needs to be repealed and related actions rectified immediately. Rest assured that this issue will strongly affect my vote in the primary on June 12 as well as the November election.</p>
<p>As a provider of business services in the food and beverage industry I understand how lean the margins are for restaurants. This tax is short-sighted, and demonstrates poor economic understanding and poor governance.</p>
<p>As a successful retailer in Old Town with two businesses I need quality restaurants in my business ecosystem in order to survive. If you make it even more expensive to live, work, and do business in town you will lose people - visitors, qualified employees, visitors, new residents, and new businesses like NSF or HQ2 - instead of adding much needed economic development.</p>
<p>Breaking bread is an ancient tradition of peace of friendship. It is what we do to celebrate and also to mourn those we have lost. Dining out in Alexandria is the main reason many people come to Alexandria. They shop at our unique stores during their visits as well as visit our historic sites. The restaurants in Alexandria have been a main reason people come to our town. Additionally, the restaurateurs are continually and exceptionately generous in donating food to Alexandria nonprofits. To tax them further makes no good sense and risks losing the very significant good they do for our community.</p>
<p>City should find an alternative to affordable housing and not tax business.</p>
<p>Do not increase the tax</p>
<p>Do not raise taxes on anything! This does nothing but stifle business. As a small business owner we</p>

want to encourage more people to come to Alexandria NOT give them a reason to stay away!
Don't ruin Alexandria's future with excessive taxation on small businesses.
Find another path to affordable housing!
Fix it, Alexandria! Until then I'll dine elsewhere!
Further taxation will not draw business to Alexandria and will make it harder on those already there.
FYI, Fairfax County has a ZERO percent meals tax.
I am totally against this increase on tax in Alexandria, as a leader in Business and as a local living in the area.
I believe we should expand affordable housing but not at the expense of restaurants. It's the wrong place to turn for the revenue -- why not get it from the real estate tax which is related to housing???? It makes no sense. The Council made some bad decisions/deals about affordable housing units in the 2000s but restaurants shouldn't be penalized for their bad decisions. That singles out one group to pay the price -- a group that is least likely to be able to afford it. Are you rebating the credit card fees????
I do support items 1, 3 and 4 above and feel that this meals tax increase requires additional research and consideration. I am generally not in favor of singling out one group of individuals for differential treatment. Please reconsider the meals tax as it is currently structured and enacted.
I don't understand how penalizing residents who want to eat at the many restaurants in Alexandria makes sense.
I have supported Alexandria for 12 years, we chose to have our business here. But we, as restaurants, have to comply with so many hoops that would make one think the city isn't interested in having our businesses here. Now this!?
I hope the City Council takes a good look at what they are doing here. Do not tak the easy way out by adding another tax to Alexandria Restaurants. Remember restaurants are the attraction that bring people to Alexandria and keep them here.
I hope the restaurant community can partner with the City to find another source of revenue for affordable housing. I will happily volunteer if needed.
I live and have businesses (including a restaurant) in Alexandria City, and am very upset by how independently owned restaurants and other small businesses continue to be targeted by the city to take the brunt of responsibility for tax issues. As it turns out Alexandria City is one the LEAST small business friendly cities I have ever lived in, let's try to change this please.
I work in Alexandria and my company pays taxes in Alexandria - Between Virginia and Alexandria, we already have a high meals tax, I urge you not to allow this to go through.
I would be more likely to eat elsewhere if this bill passes.
I would like to see an immediate plan to address the affordable housing crisis that does not include raising taxes.
I'm chair of Alexandria Republican Party. We would be glad to help. Let me know. Personally, I owned a restaurant in Crystal City for 5 yrs, worked for Sam Adams Brewery for almost 5 yrs and also worked corporate foodservice for Aramark. Combined with a MBA and doctorate in management, I have some decent insight into the Food Tax issue and its implications.
I'm absolutely for work force house but it should be funded another way
It is an unfair burden for one group to pay for the entirety of the community. This is a shared

responsibility for Alexandria to take care of its own. The 5% tax is low hanging fruit and shows a lack of careful community planning for its citizens. It WILL harm business. It WILL harm an already challenging economic environment where people have so many options on where to dine and play.
It is fundamentally wrong for any tax increase to be passed by our City Council without any public hearing. Further, while I am against any dedicated funding (as budgets should be based on the priorities of a City and should not need dedicated funding), if Council deems that funds should be dedicated, that decision should be endorsed and paid for by all residents and commercial enterprises of this City. Shame on this Council for this recent decision by the Mayor and three of our current Council members.
it is simply not fair to single out restaurants to raise city revenue. Raise the tax on all businesses if necessary by a small amount, but not fair to restaurants to be singled out continuously
It's already been stated, it's not fair to solely put this tax on the shoulders of the hospitality industry!
My husband and I have seen some sort of tax increase every year since becoming Alexandria City residents and homeowners. It's very troublesome and makes us regret moving here. The meal tax increase is just another example of how the Alexandria City elected officials are irresponsible and unimaginative in their governing. We look forward to spending our money on eating out in Arlington and other surrounding areas.
No New Taxes!
No no no!
Now I'm not gonna be able to get a raise. My boss take great care of use. This is hurting all of use.
Our finer restaurants are already considering leaving Alexandria. This additional tax will only enhance their desire to leave.
Overreach of government, redistribution of wealth and social engineering are never productive. Ever...
Please don't raise the tax.
Proud to support our restaurants and small businesses.
Quit with harming Alexandria households and small businesses with all of these tax increases! Hurting locally owned small business is hurting our small town charm.
Raising meal taxes does nothing to produce revenue for communities. It only drives the locals to neighboring communities with lower tax levels. I have experienced this exact scenario for years in Manassas. People simply drive across the county/city lines to dine in competitors establishments. Why would you choose to punish the local businessmen and women?
Raising the meals tax, pushing over 10% tax to diners will be a negative financial hit to Alexandria over time
Repeal The Tax
Ridiculous to pass this along to the citizen here in City of Alexandria
Saving the discussion of policy goals for another time, regressive taxes targeted at particular industries or behaviors is a horrible way of raising revenue.
So much spending is unnecessary. No need to raise taxes.
Stop the taxes!
Support funding affordable housing, just not on the backs of restaurants - everyone should contribute.

Thank you for doing this
Thank you for doing this!
Thank you for rallying the community to support one of our greatest resources - our great restaurants!!!
Thank you for your consideration.
That is a 25% increase in a tax that would hit the people you are supposedly trying to help.
The restaurants do far more than their share for our community and should not carry the burden for housing monies.
There is still time to correct what amounts to a regressive tax for the employees and restaurant goers and an unfair tax for the restaurant owners, especially for our small business restaurants in the City. Look for long term solutions that have been well thought out, studied appropriately, and does not put the burden on one sector of the community.
This is a terrible idea, and in no way should housing be tied to small businesses.
This is a terrible idea, and in no way should housing be tied to small businesses.
This is getting absurd. 11% on a meal in the city of Alexandria. On principle, I will be dining in Fairfax County and Arlington more often.
This is so wrong.
This meal tax is idiotic. What's next, a 1% tax on nail salons to fix our sewage system? A 1% tax on day care to pay for the new high school? Do better!!!!
This tax feels like a short sighted solution that will hurt Alexandria in the long-run. I urge you to adopt the solutions in this petition!
This tax will have a negative financial impact for Alexandria moving into the future. As small business owner we already are struggling with increased costs, and while this is a pass through for the business, customers will not see it that way.
This will push local tourists to National Harbor & the new Wharf project. Bad idea for ALL businesses in Old Town. Excessive taxes are not the solution.
We are going down the wrong road on taxing our restaurants I guess they are just fair game.
We are strongly opposed to this additional burden on our industry.
We need to take care of the businesses that bring folks to live and visit our communities.
We need business to attract customers not to take them away because of high price of food and other businesses (tax)
We should be doing everything we can to make it MORE likely tourists and locals will eat in Alexandria, not LESS. It's unfair - especially with the concentration of eateries in Old Town it will fall disproportionately on them and those who visit Old Town. The whole idea of taxation is to spread it across the widest possible net so that no one entity takes a harder hit (unless they are deriving a direct benefit from the good that the tax supports). Affordable housing is a common good for ALL of Alexandria! It seems to me that those who have means in the City should share in the investment so that those who work here for modest wages aren't forced to the hinterlands to live.
We spend almost all our entertaining budget in Old Town, but now look to Fairfax for options.
Why should restaurants/diners be punished for wanting to enjoy a meal out/providing revenue for the city where we already live and work. Already diners have to pay 10% for taxes on all their meals out and this will surely discourage people from going out to eat and visiting Alexandria.

Yes extremely unfair to Restaurants and Old town Residents and Diners!!

You have to stop sometime.

There are other restaurants in the area that do not have a tax like this. I'm happy to drive to avoid it!