Hillsborough County, Florida

Transportation Funding Initiative

Election Cycle: November 2010

Title: Hillsborough County Sales Tax

Type of Initiative: Ballot Referendum

Sponsor: Hillsborough County Commission

Summary of Ballot Referendum: The Hillsborough County Commission passed this transit sales tax with a vote of 5 to 2 on May 13, 2010. As a result of this vote, the issue was then placed on the November ballot for voters to approve or reject.

Status of Ballot Referendum: This ballot referendum was defeated on November 2, 2010—58% opposed this measure, while roughly 42% supported its passage.

Overview of Campaign

The two main organizations in support of the ballot referendum were organized by the Tampa Bay Partnership, and the campaign was known as “Tampa Bay on Track” and the second central campaign was called “Moving Hillsborough Forward.” The main opposition campaign was “No Tax for Tracks.”

Proponents

Public Officials:

1. Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio
2. Former U.S. Representative Jim Davis
3. Hillsborough County Commissioner Rose Ferlita
4. Hillsborough County Commissioner Ken Hagan
5. Hillsborough County Commissioner Kevin White
6. Hillsborough County Commissioner Kevin Beckner
7. Hillsborough County Commissioner Mark Sharpe

Organizations:

1. Moving Hillsborough Forward (Organization: The Tampa Bay Partnership)

The Moving Hillsborough Forward (MHF) was a broad coalition led by the Tampa Bay Partnership. MHF campaign manager David Singer said that “the great part of MHF is that we have Democrats, Republicans, leaders from both business and labor. We have teachers and home builders. It's a wider spectrum of ideologies, professions and ethnicities than any other movement could hope to have.”

Moving Hillsborough Forward received strong support from the business community. However, opposition to the transit sales tax has focused on how the spending would be wasteful and unnecessary;

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David Singer responded to this opposition by saying “facts and education are our best advocacy. We don’t need to spin them.”

Members of Coalition Include:

- Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce
- St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce
- Tampa Bay Builders Association
- Sierra Club

Campaign Information, Strategies & Tactics

- Campaign Manager: David Singer (Attorney)
- Campaign Chair, Deputy Treasurer and Registered Agent: Gary Sasso
- Communications Director: Margie Martin
- Treasurer: Chuck Sykes
- Deputy Treasurer: Stuart Rogel
- Financial Management: Kelly Kavanaugh
- Campaign Employee: Dewayne L. Mallory

Campaign Finance Information

- Raised $1.7 million in cash and in-kind contributions.
- First donation was from Suntrust Bank for $50,000.
- Holland & Knight donated $25,000
- Regions Bank donated $25,000
- Tampa Electric Company donated $40,000
- Tampa Bay Rays donated $15,000
- Raymond James Financial (operates Buccaneers’ stadium) donated $50,000.
- In the end, this campaign spent almost $12 for each of the 124,407 votes received on Election Day.
- Campaign Website: http://www.movinghillsboroughforward.org/

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Political and Media Consultants for Moving Hillsborough Forward Campaign

- **Martin Communications**: $3,000/month rate for communications services (according to Moving Hillsborough Forward financial report)

- **Margie Martin (Owner)**: Her e-mail address is margie@martincommunications.biz

- **Martin Communications Official Website**: [http://www.martincommunications.biz/](http://www.martincommunications.biz/)

- **Address**: Martin Communications, Inc. P.O. Box 291288 Tampa, FL 33687

- **Martin Communications’ Services**: Martin Communications provide an array of marketing and public relations services to clients, which include:
  - Strategic public relations services
  - Traditional media relations
  - Online media relations
  - Social Media
  - Research and Measurement services
  - Community Outreach
  - Crisis Public Relations
  - Event Planning
  - Writing
  - Advertising Design
  - Advertising Placement

*Advertising Materials/Marketing Efforts*

Opposition

Public Officials:

1. Hillsborough County Commissioner Jim Norman
2. Hillsborough County Commissioner Al Higginbotham

Organizations:

“No Tax for Tracks” Campaign

Campaign Finance

- Raised $24,179 in cash and in-kind contributions by October 29, 2010
- Main Campaign Donor: $11,000 from Sam Rashid (CEO of Holtec USA Corp)
- Campaign spent $19,290 as of October 29, 2010.
- Campaign spent approximately 12 cents for each of the 172,628 votes

Campaign Staff

- Sharon Calvert, president of the Tampa Tea Party and No Tax for Tracks
- Karen Jaroch

1. Suburban Moms Against the Rail Tax (Smartmoms)
2. Tampa 9.12 Project (Tea Party Offshoot Organization)
3. CATO Institute & Heritage Foundation

Polling Data

1. AAA Auto Club South Telephone Survey (March 2010)

- 250,000 Hillsborough County AAA members responded to this survey, which was conducted from March 16, 2010 through March 19, 2010.

- 52% of respondents supported the transit tax proposal, and 48% opposed the proposal.

- 53% of respondents believed that it was “important” for the county to have a transportation plan, while 20% did not categorize this as an issue of importance.
2. **St. Petersburg Times Poll (October 2010)**

- This poll was conducted by the American Directions Group, which is a national polling firm, and the poll was administered from October 1, 2010 through October 3, 2010.
- 495 definite Hillsborough registered voters were polled along with 106 likely voters.
- 51% of Hillsborough County voters supported the transportation tax proposal, while 31% opposed it and 10% had not determined whether they support or oppose it.
- 54% of those who opposed the transportation tax identified as Republicans, 45% of Republicans supported the tax, and 4% were undecided.
- 57% of Democrats supported the transportation tax plan, while 28% opposed it and 15% were undecided.

*Why Referendum Failed*

1. **“Moving Hillsborough Forward Campaign” Problems**

   “Karen Jaroch of NoTaxForTracks.com exclaims “Moving Hillsborough Forward calling itself ‘grassroots’ is laughable. How can a group formed by powerful special interests with a paid staff and profit motive consider themselves such? While a true grassroots cause is irrigated by sweat, an Astroturf one is nourished by money; and Moving Hillsborough Forward has received a lot it from special interests like bankers, land use attorneys, developers, engineering firms and downtown corporate interests that have a vested interest in rail versus expanded bus service.”

2. **Effective Anti-Transportation Tax Campaign Led By “No Tax for Tracks” Campaign**

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4http://www.baynews9.com/content/news/articles/ot/both/2010/10/08/Exclusive_Poll_Hillsborough_drivers_undecided_about_transportation_tax.html
References


http://floridaindependent.com/5201/powerful-tampa-bay-interests-campaign-for-local-light-rail-funding


http://railtaxfacts.com/


David Singer:  http://www.sodlegal.com/professionals/davidsinger.html


http://www.myoldsmar.com/Pages/Agendas/OldsmarFL_CouncilAgendas/10192010/Item005.pdf


http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/baybuzz/content/moving-hillsborough-forward-pushes-back-against-national-anti-rail-contingent

Campaign Staff Information and Problems


http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/editorials/put-plan-for-transportation-tax-on-the-ballot/1094220


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