

We need the local option tax

The most important local issue voters will address Nov. 4 is the local option tax — whether a one-cent local sales tax should be levied on items other than necessities such as food.

We believe the tax is worthwhile, fair and necessary.

With the decline in federal aid to local government — most notably, the elimination of federal revenue sharing funds — Ames and Story County will be in sore need of revenue. With revenue sharing funds local government contributed some \$600,000 per year to human services agencies and the arts. Those agencies, which are so important to the quality of life we enjoy in Central Iowa, could be snuffed without replacement of funds.

One of the only ways to increase revenue to local governments other than the sales tax is through increasing property taxes, a regressive system not based on ability to pay. Property owners — and renters, who indirectly pay property taxes — are burdened enough.

A local option tax would generate revenue from those people with the best ability to afford it, people with disposable income. Also, it would provide a way to tap visitors to Ames who enjoy the wealth of cultural attractions currently propped up by local government, to which they do not pay.

As the Committee for Property Tax Relief, a group campaigning for the tax, has pointed out, a local option tax is the fairest way to spread the burden over all the people who buy non-necessities in Ames and Story County.

Such a tax, supported by a majority of the Ames Chamber of Commerce members, could provide human services and arts agencies with some \$750,000 a year and keep them in business. We shouldn't let them down. Neither should we let down property owners, who could realize more than \$1 million per year in tax relief.

The local option tax deserves to pass in November. We need it.