

10/31

Option tax backers make final push

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In the past two weeks a new sign has been added to the mass of political advertisements gracing the lawns of Ames — a sign signifying a new approach to an issue that's been around for the whole campaign.

"It's strategy I guess," said Tim Finn, co-chairman for the Committee for Property Tax Relief, which has bought about 500 yard signs and has spent close to \$5,000 on signs and advertisements. The group's plug is for the one-cent local option tax that will be included on Tuesday's ballot.

The tax is "really a community sales tax," he said. Sixty percent of the money is for property tax relief and 40 percent will go to human services agencies which

TAX / to page 11 ►

from page 1 / TAX

have been hurt by the loss of federal revenue sharing funds.

The tax is expected to generate \$1.1 million for property tax relief.

"[Mayor Goodland] doesn't want people to think [property taxes will be] zooming down. We never said that. Obviously, running government is expensive with inflation," Finn said.

The Iowa State Government of the Student Body has voted 18-16 to oppose the tax, saying it is unfair to students.

Brian Kennedy, GSB president, says the sales tax is "shifting the tax burden off property owners and onto students."

Students living in the residence halls do not pay property tax, but will have to pay the sales tax, Kennedy said. And students living in apartments, who pay property tax through rent, will not see a rent decrease, but will still have to pay the tax.

"It's a bad time for it to become more expensive for students to live in Ames," Kennedy said.

But Finn says the amount of sales tax an individual student would pay is only about \$15 a year, and that the human services benefits "far outweigh that very minimal tax."

IF THE TAX IS defeated on Tuesday, the big loser would be human services, said Irene Howard, staff representative for Analysis of Social Service Evaluation Team. The group



TIM FINN

makes recommendations for Ames human services.

"I don't see any additional funding coming down. If local option does not pass, raising property tax, as far as the county is concerned, is the only way for money. For the city it would be liquor profit taxes," Howard said.

The Assault Care Center Extending Shelter and Support, Committee on Criminal Justice and Legal Aid are just three of the services that probably would close if the option tax is not passed, she said.

The last push for the issue before the election may be too little too late, Howard said.

"It's kind of last minute. If I would have been involved I probably would have started a little sooner," she said.

However, Finn defends the committee's publicity blitz.

"This is a ballot issue, not a personality type of thing. It's not something people focus on until nearer to the election," he said.