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**SPLOST sales tax funds are paid by visitors?**

A. It is not critical, but the main point is that the people who come to Blairsville and Union County to camp, stay in motels, eat at our restaurants, purchase gas, buy and build homes and supplies, all help us pay for our county SPLOST and our school ESPLOST.

**Q. Since SPLOST is for extra things for our county, do we really save on property taxes when others come to Union County and spend their money here?**

A. Absolutely! Yes, SPLOST and ESPLOST (Education) sales taxes are restricted as to what the money can be used for. It can not be used for maintenance and normal operation of government, but it can be used for new capital purchases and real estate.

**Q. How do new purchases help us reduce property taxes?**

A. When we purchase sheriff cars, fire engines, motor graders, backhoes, bobcats, and other paving equipment, without SPLOST, these funds would have to come directly out of your property taxes. More importantly is our paving and road resurfacing can also be paid for with SPLOST funds, which usually exceeds a million dollars per year on its own.

**Q. What are some of**

**the large projects that you anticipate the SPLOST sales tax funds will be used for?**

A. As our county grows in population, we will always have to add to our recreation facilities. We are currently in the planning stages for a new double gym and 8-year-old and under four ballfield park complex located across from the Farmers Market. We also want to complete the planned outdoor amphitheater at Meeks Park and add a nice pavilion.

**Q. What are some of the facilities that we now have that we could not have ever built without SPLOST funds?**

There are many facilities in the county that would not be here if it was not for SPLOST funds. Some of these include: The Horse Arena, Union County Community Center, Farmers Market, Fire Station 1, Suches Community Center, Splash Pad, Meeks Park 2, Civic Center renovations, Union County Library, Senior Center renovations, Highway 325 Convenience Center, Choestoe School House, various fire trucks and Fire Department equipment, and Sheriff's Office and Road Department Equipment.

Our SPLOST is the lifeblood of what helps make Union County one of the best counties in the state with the 2nd lowest property tax rate out of 159 counties.

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it would be that of drug using employees when they discover they might be caught.

"Designing a program and implementing drug testing will take too much time and effort and take employees away from the job for hours on end."

This is not necessarily true. Mobile drug testing companies will not only design legally compliant testing and training programs for your company's specific needs, they also bring the lab right to your door. They'll do the specimen collection and paperwork part of the job, so you don't have to, and employee downtime is virtually eliminated.

"Drug testing infringes on my rights."

The courts have consistently ruled otherwise, coming down firmly on the side of your employer's right to drug test. Georgia even offers financial incentives in the form of Worker's Compensation insurance premium discounts to companies working to maintain a drug-free workplace. Illegal drugs can still be a choice an employee makes, and employers have a right to keep their workplace safer and free of it.

"My drug test could come up positive, even though I don't use drugs."

False positives could only result when there are several failures compounded in not just the testing, but the review, reporting, and evaluation of the test results. Accredited labs with chromatographic testing can tell the difference between poppy seeds and prescription drugs, or cold medicine and

meth. This myth dates back to the earliest days of drug testing, but somehow the stories about false positives haven't evolved as rapidly as the testing technology. There are "best practice" procedures in place that make false positives a thing of the past. Results also require validation by a medical review officer. The drug testing company doesn't fire employees. It presents scientific results.

"I can beat a drug test."  
No, you probably can't. Like false positives, "cheating" a drug test requires several failures in the testing procedure, not just one, and none of the ways found on the internet are unknown to testing companies. Testing has become extremely sophisticated.

Drinking a lot of water or popping diuretics won't work, because while those tricks do dilute the metabolites in your urine, they also dilute creatinine, so your test will be flagged. Chugging vinegar won't work, because it lowers your urine's pH, and it will also be flagged. Messing up your urine with bleach, Drano, or something you bought off the 'net won't work, because those chemicals can be detected.

Using a synthetic would require it to look and smell like urine, but also be the correct temperature, not too cold or too hot, and also requires successfully smuggling in both the synthetic and the delivery device, which is looked for by test collectors.

Drug testing works, and that's no myth.

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Runoff from roads usually contains chemicals that can have an effect on your plants, but especially when salted in the winter. Salty runoff also changes the quality of the soil by causing it to compact, restricting nutrients, water and other important resources for your plants. Though salt may be applied throughout the winter, most of the damage is seen toward the end of the season when plants begin to actively grow. The primary symptom of salt damage is leaves or needles having dried or scorched edges.

To prevent this, never pile snow containing salt or other runoff around plant root zones, or in an area where it will melt and run down to these zones. If you think your plants may have salt damage, flush the area around them with 2 inches of water for two to three hours and repeating this for three days. This should get rid of much of the salt buildup causing the issue.

Contact your local extension office if you would like more information on dealing with winter injury.

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store to return the dog to my friend. The two met and while they were talking in the parking lot a car backed up and hit Bingo and his owner. He said, "I just stood there and watched as this teenager ran over my foot and then sped away".

Patrick soon noticed the dog had lost his name tag so he drove to the hardware store and picked up a name tag and new collar. He walked back to his truck and opened the door. I said earlier that Bingo had grown out of the playful puppy stage, but, I was wrong. When the door of the truck opened the dog leaped from the truck and began playing chase with my friend in the parking lot of the hardware store. Another customer soon noticed the commotion and tried to stop the antics of Bingo. As the dog ran toward the man he spread out his arms and legs and bellowed "whoa". This scared the dog and he bolted for the highway. Bingo ran across 3 lanes of traffic causing a couple of cars to skid off the road. Bingo ran toward a car lot where a family was looking at a new car. The family had left a car door open and a grandmother was sitting

in the back seat with her head turned away from the open door.

Bingo jumped into the back seat and as Patrick reached the car he found the elderly lady in a state of expanded surprise.

Patrick's last words to me before the Christmas break were, "I am taking Bingo to the vet's office next week and I hope I can get his wanderlust cured. If you find a brownish black dog over the holidays please do not call me." I don't know exactly what Bingo is worth, but, I know Patrick has a small mint invested in Bingo.

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lives. They have value because all are made in God's image regardless of who their parents are, what their health is, or how independent they are.

Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Mat. 19:14). He wants the precious ones to have life, and have it abundantly.

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long term changes over the entire globe. Weather is variable, but climate change continues to show a definite warming trend. The last 4 years have been the warmest in recorded history, and we are now almost 2 degrees Fahrenheit above preindustrial temperatures.

However, we should start this new year on a hopeful note. Prices of wind and solar energy continue to drop, and the conversion to a clean energy economy is increasing. America's grid is proving more resilient as more alternative energy comes on board. Adoption of a climate fee and dividend plan would be the simplest, most effective way to speed up this process. Not only would it markedly decrease greenhouse gases, but it would also add millions of new American jobs and make America more prosperous. We are America, the greatest nation on earth, and I believe we will unite to combat climate change, one of the greatest problems of our age.

**Vernon Dixon**

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is a demonstration that we are called together to be One.

Our Country's founding is the most unique in the entire world, where our Constitution grants the majority of power to the People. However, it is our responsibility to see that we use that privilege responsibly.

If your Church hasn't sent a representative to join the once-a-month Awake America prayer, I implore you to consider having your Church represented. It's just an hour (one lunch-hour a month?) and I guarantee that you will be moved by the experience. There are specific areas of prayer that are assigned to those willing to pray aloud, and no one else needs to feel obligated to pray aloud. In short, it is a privilege to be among the Body of Believers, and I guarantee that you—whether Pastor or Congregant—representing your church, who marks the calendar and attends next month will be blessed beyond your expectations.

The next date will be February 1st in Blairsville, and February 8th in Hiwassee. Please join one of these groups; when you are not with us, there is a hole marking your absence, and you are missed!

**Arlene M. Gray**

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thing in my heart told me I was missing something special called the grace of God. I never knew much about Jesus Christ, except what I heard others say, so I just dismissed it and went on my merry way. Then a moment in time came to me when I turned 52 years of age and the Lord God came gently and knocked on my heart. He had been waiting for 52 years for my heart to be opened to the leading of His Word and in that moment of eternity I accepted Christ into my life by repenting of my sins and asking forgiveness by His shed blood on the cross.

It has been 25 years since that day when the Holy Spirit made His home in my heart and I have been "sold out" ever since. No, I am not perfect. Yes I still fail Him at times and disappoint Him many times, but His love for me never wavers. It always stays the same because He is "sold out" to

me. I long each day to be more Christ-like towards others, not judging or condemning anyone, but loving all who cross my path, for when you are "sold out" to Christ this is your mission for life here and now to tell others how to become "sold out" to Jesus. Being a believer in Christ you are always under the radar, because other folks are looking to see what is different in my life that they might want to invest in as well.

Being "sold out" to Christ brings me peace in a world of chaos. It brings me comfort when sorrow befalls me. It brings me joy even in moments of pain and suffering and it brings me eternal life with my Lord and Savior, when He calls me home to heaven. Are you SOLD OUT to Christ? It's never too late. He's just waiting for an open heart to reside in. Amen

**Frank F. Combs**

**Veterans Memorial Cemeteries**

These two locations provide final resting places for Georgia's veterans and serve as shrines to their memory and their service to our nation:

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Glen- nville

Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery at Milled- geville

**Requirements for Burial**

To be eligible for burial in the cemetery, a veteran must have military service

under the rules established by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Proper paperwork is required to determine eligibility. The veteran's name; rank; serial, social security and VA claim numbers; date of birth and date of death must be provided to cemetery personnel. A copy of the veteran's DD Form 214 or other proof of service is required. A copy of the marriage certificate is required for the spouse to be buried with the veteran.