

Ballot Title

The city council adopted Resolution 1341 concerning a proposition for funding an established cultural access program. If approved, this proposition would increase the sales and use tax rate by one-tenth of one percent (0.1%) to provide funding for cultural access consistent with RCW 36.160. Proceeds will fund eligible cultural organizations, public school cultural access, and up to 10% could be spent on program administration costs. This tax would be effective for seven years.

Should this proposition be approved?

Explanatory Statement

The Gig Harbor City Council passed Ordinance 1546 on July 14, 2025, which created a new cultural access program. The program promotes the advancement and preservation of cultural activities which include science, technology, the visual and performing arts, zoology, botany, anthropology, heritage, and natural history.

The adoption of this program included a one-tenth of one percent (0.1%) sales and use tax conditioned on the specific authorization of a majority of the voters of the city. If passed, this proposition would authorize imposition of that tax to fund the cultural access program. It is estimated the sales and use tax increase may generate \$1,200,000 per year for these purposes.

Tax revenues collected will be allocated through the program for public school cultural access programming, to support eligible cultural organizations for cultural programs, events, or activities, and to cover administrative costs, which is capped at 10%. All tax proceeds collected will be allocated in a manner consistent with Chapter 36.160 RCW. This tax would become effective in 2026 and would be effective for a period of seven years.

Statement For**There is an Urgent Need.**

Voting yes on Proposition #1 keeps doors open to vital programming. Federal funding cuts are hitting our local nonprofit providers hard. Harbor WildWatch's budget has taken a 25% hit. Digitization grants targeted by the Museum have been eliminated. All our arts and cultural organizations are being impacted. Cultural Access preserves vital science, arts, history, and cultural programming for our community. These programs activate minds, inspire personal growth, and serve everyone—from young children to seniors.

This Measure Helps our Whole Community.

Visitors to the History Museum, Marine Life Center, and BoatShop bring over \$1.5 million to our local economy. Add the programs and performances of arts groups, and that number doubles. If these places and programs go away, local businesses will lose customers and money.

Community Funding that Works.

Cultural access has proven successful in every community that has adopted it. Gig Harbor shouldn't wait. Our people and local educational organizations need this funding now--before it's too late.

Rebuttal

Don't be fooled. Many once-reliable "funding mechanisms" for arts, culture and science are gone. Grants are more competitive than ever. Cultural Access can fix that. Sales tax in Gig Harbor would go from 9.1% to 9.2%, among the lowest in Washington--lower than Port Orchard or Tacoma. It is doable for all; just one penny per \$10 spent, excluding food. Visitors pay the largest share. Cultural Access provides far more value than it costs.

Committee Members: Stephanie Lile, Ken Malich, Josie Emmons Turner
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Statement Against

We all value cultural arts—they enrich our communities, inspire creativity, and bring people together. However, this proposed 0.1% sales tax increase is not the right way to fund them.

Sales taxes are regressive, meaning they hit working families and those on fixed incomes the hardest. At a time when many households are already struggling with rising costs, adding yet another tax—no matter how small—creates an unnecessary burden.

Importantly, funding mechanisms for arts and culture already exist through state and local programs, grants, and private partnerships. Instead of layering on a new tax, we should focus on using existing resources more efficiently and prioritizing arts funding within current budgets.

We can support the arts without creating a new tax increase that hurts those least able to afford it. Vote *no* on this regressive tax.

Rebuttal

No rebuttal statement was submitted against this issue.

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