

October 16, 2017


Citizens of Nowata,

You have an opportunity in November to consider extending a sales tax for roads. I write to you to make you aware of circumstances affecting yours and your neighbor's safety, and the opportunity to act. I will ask you to **VOTE NO** on the upcoming proposal in order to send a message to your County Commissioners that you desire the chance to consider, discuss, and vote on the matter of public safety in your County. This sales tax proposal is critical because once passed, it cannot be changed for years and no additional proposals can be brought for you to consider!

Since at least 2006, the Nowata County Sheriffs Office has been funded in great part by a contract with the Department of Corrections to house DOC prisoners. That contract provided between \$415,000 and \$556,000 per year. Conversely, the County provided between \$70,000 and \$150,000 additional funds per year. In March 2017, DOC cancelled all 10 contracts it had around the state, including Nowata's due to the state's financial crisis. Prior to this year's budget process I met with Excise Board members to emphasize the critical needs of the Sheriff's office, and the need to find what funding was available to increase the County's contribution. The Excise Board rose to that challenge and funded an additional \$260,000. This resulted in having adequate funding to run the jail, a mandate of the State Constitution. But, little or no money is left to provide for deputies to patrol the county or respond to emergency calls.

Both the Sheriff and I encouraged the County Commissioners to craft and present to Nowata County voters a ballot initiative which would allow you, the citizens, to decide if having Patrol Deputies in the County is important to you. They have decided instead to seek renewal of the road funds which they control, thereby merely meeting the Constitutional requirement of funding the jail and leaving each and every other public safety service unfunded. I believe both can be done, but the County Commissioners are the ones who have to decide whether or not you have a chance to consider and vote on this issue. If having Patrol Deputies in the County is an important issue to you, then **VOTE NO** and send the proposal back to the Commissioners to consider your input.

The use of sales tax to partially fund the Sheriff's Office is practiced in many of our Oklahoma counties and is nothing new or novel. What would be new and novel is a Sheriff's Office with few or no deputies to respond to citizens in trouble or need, and a county that purposefully chose to leave its citizens unprotected. But, this is the reality of Nowata County today. If you want to keep it that way, support the renewal of the road tax. If not, I urge you to **VOTE NO**.



Kevin D. Buchanan, District Attorney
For Nowata and Washington Counties