

## County sales tax approved

Written by Ty Albin, The Lawton Constitution  
Wednesday, 25 June 2014 01:48 -

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Voters handily passed a Comanche County sales tax proposal during Tuesday's election.

The proposal contains a 3/8-cent county sales tax that combines two existing 1/8-cent sales taxes with a new 1/8-cent sales tax to pay for the rising cost of operating the Comanche County Detention Center.

The 3/8-cent sales tax will take effect Jan. 1, 2015, and run through Dec. 31, 2021.

The pre-existing 1/8-cent sales tax to benefit county entities would have expired Dec. 31. The pre-existing 1/8-cent sales tax to benefit the jail would have expired Dec. 31, 2015.

As of 9 p.m. Tuesday, the proposal was unofficially sitting at more than 60 percent of the vote with 37 of 39 precincts reporting.

Gail Turner, chairman of the Comanche County commissioners, expressed relief that the proposal had passed.

"I'm grateful to all of the voters and the entities who supported the proposal," said Turner.

The chairman of the commissioners said if the proposal had failed, it would have put the county in a serious bind concerning jail operations.

The combined 3/8-cent sales tax will pump additional revenue into the jail fund, which has suffered from increasing local inmate populations and higher costs of food, utilities and other necessities in recent years. Also, more local inmates means there are fewer beds for the jail to rent to state and federal entities to house their prisoners. The money from renting those beds

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used to help fund jail operations.

Turner said last week that if the proposal did not pass, the county would have to make difficult decisions about where to find the money to operate the jail from other sources in the county budget.

The combined sales tax will also give additional revenue to various county agencies, including the volunteer fire departments, the Comanche County Sheriff's office, and the Comanche County Industrial Development Authority through reapportionment of the tax money collected.

"We'll be frugal with the taxpayer's money," Turner said.

All election results remain unofficial until certified by the Oklahoma State Election Board.