

Region 26 - Testing CodeRed & Sirens

Weather Awareness Week is March 25th through 29th with the State tornado drill on Wednesday, March 27.

Sirens will be tested on Wednesday, March 27 between 10:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. in many of the Region 26 towns.

This is a time to review your tornado plan for taking shelter, either at work or at home. Region 26 will also be testing their CodeRED emergency alerting system March 29 in conjunction with the statewide testing.

Residents and businesses in Region 26 will receive a test call if you have registered with CodeRed.

The recording might ask for you to press any key to listen to the message. The test call-out will come from phone #308-942-3462 and text from #76993. Weather alerts would come from #1-800-566-9780.

If you are not signed up to receive the CodeRED alerts, you may do so by calling the Region 26 office at

308-942-3461 if you live in Thomas, Blaine, Loup, Garfield, Wheeler, Greeley, Valley or Sherman counties.

You do not need to register again if you have signed up before. If you have a pre-recorded message on your phone, CodeRED alerts will not come through.

On your cellphone it might show as a spam call since we are sending out so many at one time. That is a good reason to save the



number listed to help you identify that it is a good number to answer. Any emergency

call-out from Region 26 will come from #308-942-3462. The date for the

CodeRed call out is subject to change in the event of inclement weather.

Hopping Into The Easter Season



LINDA TEAHON

Once again Swisher Haying from Halsey has placed bale art decorated for Easter in Halsey and Dunning. These cute characters and Easter eggs are created free hand by Karen Swisher. Travelers for the Easter holiday, following the Sandhills Journey National Scenic Byway Highway #2, will certainly enjoy the fun scenery.

Epic battle over taxes shaping up, with one group warning against an ‘EPIC’ mistake

New analysis by Tax Foundation says EPIC tax of 21.6% would be needed, not 7.5% as EPIC backers say

Paul Hammel
Senior Reporter
Nebraska Examiner

A group of business and government organizations publicly launched its effort Thursday to oppose the initiative petition seeking to replace all state taxes with a consumption tax.

They called the EPIC Option Consumption Tax initiative “flawed,” a “devastating” elimination of local government control, and a proposal based on inaccurate estimates of its ability to replace all sales, income and property taxes.

“Property taxes in Nebraska are too high, but EPIC is not the solution,” said former State Sen. Dan Hughes of Venango.

New report: 21.6% tax rate needed

A new analysis of the EPIC tax, released Thursday morning by the business-oriented Tax Foundation, reported that a consumption tax rate of 21.6% percent would be required to totally replace other state taxes – much higher than the 7.5% stated by EPIC backers.

The Tax Foundation results mirror a similar analysis done in March for the OpenSky Policy Institute, which concluded that an EPIC tax



Former State Sen. Dan Hughes of Venango, at podium, speaks in opposition to a proposal to replace all state taxes with a consumption tax. (Paul Hammel/Nebraska Examiner)

of 22.1% would be needed.

That would dramatically harm the state’s economy, the EPIC opponents said.

Their campaign slogan: “Stop Nebraska from Making an EPIC Mistake.”

“If you tax goods and services at 22%, no one is going to shop in Nebraska,” said former State Sen. Brett Lindstrom of Omaha.

He pointed out that 75% of the state’s population lives within an hour’s drive of another state and that they would likely cross the border to shop because of the higher

EPIC tax rate in Nebraska.

Hughes and Lindstrom were among speakers at a press conference called Thursday by the new group, “No New Taxes Nebraska,” which has formed to opposed the EPIC tax idea.

Chamber, cities oppose EPIC

Other speakers represented the League of Nebraska Municipalities, the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, the Nebraska Hospital Association, Nebraska Realtors, and the Nebraska Health Care Association.

They said they formed

an opposition group to counteract “misinformation” being spread by EPIC backers at meetings across the state as part of their signature drive to put the issue on the November ballot.

State Sen. Steve Erdman of Bayard, a leading proponent of the EPIC tax, said he wasn’t surprised by the opposition. He said it’s been those organizations that have been spreading misinformation.

He said that members of the No New Taxes group are those who benefit from current tax breaks or who gain revenue from the current tax system, which he described

as picking “winners and losers.”

The organized opposition “tells me we are on the right track,” Erdman told fellow senators about the formation of the No New Taxes group.

Erdman maintained that the new group is being financed by former Gov. and now U.S. Sen. Pete Ricketts “and his people.”

Ricketts consultant, adviser

Axiom Strategies, a political consulting firm used by Ricketts in past campaigns, distributed press releases Thursday

about the No New Taxes group. The firm also lists Jessica Flanagan, a former special adviser to Ricketts, as a partner.

Hughes and Lindstrom said the State Legislature already struggles to craft a state budget and would be hard pressed to review the budgets of all school districts, cities, counties and natural resources districts in the state. The EPIC tax would be collected at the state level, then circulated back to local governments, which critics said would eliminate local control of

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Poll results disputed

A poll released in February found that 54% of respondents in Nebraska supported the EPIC tax, with 30% “definitely” in support of it.

That prompted the sponsor of the poll, Lincoln political consultant Perre Neilan, to say that the EPIC proposal was not in a strong starting position to qualify for the 2024 ballot, since support usually drops once an organized opposition is mounted.

At the time, Erdman responded that Neilan was misreading the poll results.