



## SALES TAX ELECTION

# Perry County Emergency Services 0.5% Sales Tax Election

**ELECTION DATE:** Tuesday, November 3, 2020

### What is being proposed?

Voters in Perry County have a local ballot issue to decide Nov. 3, 2020 when they go to the polls for the General Election. The Perry County Quorum Court voted to place on the ballot for voters to decide:

- A permanent 0.5% sales and use tax dedicated to providing emergency services in the county.

The tax would increase the county's sales tax rate from 2.25% to 2.75% starting Jan. 1, 2021.

### When is the election?

The election is Nov. 3, 2020. Early voting starts Oct. 19, 2020 at 116 N. Pine St. in Perryville.

Perry County voters can check their voter status or find out where they're supposed to vote on Election Day by calling the Perry County Clerk's Office at 501-889-5126. You can also check your voter registration status online at [www.voterview.ar-nova.org](http://www.voterview.ar-nova.org)

### Why is this issue on the ballot?

A county sales tax must be approved by the voters.

### What does "Emergency Services" cover?

### What are the county's plans?

The ordinance that the Perry County Quorum Court approved calling for this special election does not define "emergency services" or further explain how the revenue would be spent.

## QUICK LOOK: What does your vote mean?

### 0.5% Sales and Use Tax:

**FOR:** A FOR vote on the 0.5% countywide sales and use tax measure means you are in favor of permanently increasing the Perry County sales tax rate by 0.5% to provide emergency services in the county.

**AGAINST:** An AGAINST vote on the 0.5% countywide sales and use tax measure means you are not in favor of permanently increasing the Perry County sales tax rate to provide emergency services in the county.

### Exercising your voting privilege:

We live in a democratic society where voting is a privilege of citizenship. Democracy works best when informed citizens exercise their voting privilege. **Election Day for this issue is Nov. 3, 2020. Early voting begins Oct. 19, 2020. Please exercise your right to vote on this issue.**

**PUBLIC POLICY CENTER**

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County officials have said in public meetings and in media interviews that the county needs more ambulance service coverage, which would require funding from residents.

For this fact sheet, county officials said “emergency services” would include ambulances, volunteer fire departments and 911 service. It would not include law enforcement officers. Once the tax is secured, the county would solicit bids for ambulance services to secure a contract for two paramedic/ambulance units.

**When was the last time the county’s sales tax rate changed?**

The county sales tax in Perry County is 2.25% and has been at this rate since Jan. 1, 2019 when a temporary 0.25% sales tax pledged to pay off jail construction debt expired. Voters approved that temporary tax in 2007 as part of package of sales taxes and bond issue to build and operate the jail.

The county’s existing sales tax is dedicated to these uses:

- 1% goes to general revenue
- 0.75% goes for county roads
- 0.25% goes for jail maintenance
- 0.25% goes for solid waste

**How much revenue would the sales tax generate?**

The county anticipates the 0.5% sales tax generating between \$20,000 to \$24,000 a month.

**Who would pay the additional tax?**

The sales tax would be paid by everyone purchasing goods or services subject to a sales and use tax in the county, including in its cities.

The following statements are examples of what supporters and opponents have made public either in media statements, campaign literature, on websites or interviews with Public Policy Center staff. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture does not endorse or validate these statements.

**What do supporters say?**

- When Perry County residents call for an ambulance, it sometimes takes an hour or more for the only one based in the county to arrive.

**What do opponents say?**

- If there’s the potential of supporting private business with tax money then why can’t the county do it?

**How does Perry County’s sales tax compare to neighboring counties?**

If voters approve the county’s proposed sales taxes, Perry County’s sales tax rate would increase from 2.25% to 2.75% on Jan. 1, 2021.

Other counties in Arkansas have countywide sales tax rates ranging from 0% in Monroe County to 3.25% in Cleveland County. The median sales tax rate of Arkansas’ 75 counties is 1.75%. Nearby counties have the following sales tax rates:

County	Current County Sales Tax Rate
Conway	1.75%
Faulkner	0.5%
Garland	1.5%
Perry	2.25% (2.75%*)
Pulaski	1%
Saline	0.375%
Yell	1.875%

\*Rate if proposed sales tax is approved

Source: Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, List of cities and counties with local sales and use tax; July-September 2020.

**What would happen if the tax fails?**

County officials said they do not have an alternate plan at this moment.

**What is Perry County’s existing ambulance situation?**

Liberty EMS currently serves Perry County with one paramedic-level ambulance. A volunteer ambulance program also exists within the Perryville Volunteer Fire Department.

Liberty EMS took over from a previous provider in 2016, and originally staffed two ambulances but dropped down to one in 2018, according to a February 2020 article in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. Providers have said that without an increase in funding, service is not sustainable.

Ambulance service has been in jeopardy for much of its history in Perry County, with changes in providers who struggle to make enough money to operate in the small county. The county is home to an estimated 10,445 people and covers 551 square miles, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Industry officials told legislators during the 2019 legislative session that several factors have affected

ambulance services in rural areas, according to a recent Arkansas Democrat-Gazette article. Those factors include small population base, low reimbursement rates from Medicaid and Medicare, and increasing employee costs related to voter-approved increases in the state's minimum wage.

**Why would the county pay for ambulance services?**

County governments are not legally required to provide ambulance services. However, Arkansas Code gives county governments the authority to pass ordinances to provide services such as ambulance and health and human services. Perry County officials voiced concerns over the ability to keep ambulance service in the county for residents.

**Doesn't health insurance cover the cost of ambulance services?**

While many health insurance providers pay for ambulance rides, reimbursements and private payments from patients do not cover the entire cost of employees, ambulances, buildings and equipment necessary to make the service available.



The cost of ambulance service is paid by an individual, their private health insurance, or public programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

**Will this tax replace what people pay for ambulance services?**

No. People who receive emergency services from ambulance providers would still be responsible for the cost of their services, through their insurance or self pay.

The following is the official wording for the property tax proposal as it will appear on the ballot.

**0.5% SALES AND USE TAX**

Adoption of a 0.5% local sales and use tax within Perry County, the net collections of which remaining after deduction of the administrative charges of the State of Arkansas and required rebates will be distributed only to the County and used to provide emergency services in the County.

FOR .....

AGAINST .....

***Conflict of interest:** This fact sheet was prepared to provide the citizens of Perry County with information to help them in making an informed choice on Election Day. An effort has been made to ensure the information is presented in a fair and balanced way that best represents the facts associated with this ballot issue. As part of this effort, we are obligated to divulge potential conflict of interest and to recognize their influence on the educational programs and matter we produce. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and Perry County Cooperative Extension Service are partially funded by state and county general funds. As such, any laws affecting revenues of the state or county has the potential to affect the Perry County Extension Office.*

