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Gas Tax Hike Is Here

By Focus Staff

The hike in the gasoline tax is here and will continue rising over the next few years. This was pushed by Governor Bill Haslam and approved by the state legislature. You can expect to pay 4 cents more per gallon at the pump.

Many readers will recall the gas tax hike was retooled and labeled a tax reduction in a move to get

it through the legislature. The legislation supported by the governor increased taxes on diesel fuel, gas and increased vehicle registration fees. The administration and legislators favoring the bill hailed a 1% drop in the sales tax on food, as well as a modest reduction in the Hall Income Tax. The truth is, most Tennesseans will not see a reduction in the

taxes they pay to the State of Tennessee. Most especially hard hit will be working families. Nobody from the governor on down was ever able to explain just how everybody's taxes were lowered while the state will get \$55 million new dollars annually. Overall, taxes were increased for most Tennesseans.

It remains dubious that Tennesseans will pay less

at the gasoline pump than they do at the grocery store. Of course a plethora of special interests are singing hosannas to the tax increase, folks like AAA, the Tennessee Trucking Association, the Tennessee Road Builders Association, the Tennessee Municipal League, etc. Why are they so tickled? Because much of that \$355 million spent

annually will land in their pockets.

It goes without saying one reason people distrust politicians and government is because of tactics like those used to hike our gasoline taxes. Our elected officials ought to be bold and honest enough to simply tell us the truth and not attempt to increase taxes under the guise of returning more

of our taxes to us.

In the end, hard working folks will scrimp to pay higher gas taxes to get to work while we continue to pay out for those who don't, the special interests and the wealthy need not worry, as they will get more than their fair share of the \$355 million in new tax revenue annually.

What's floating in Fountain City Lake?

By Mike Steely

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If you see a little square island floating in the waters of the Lake at Fountain City you'll probably wonder what it is and how it got there. There's a story behind it.

A few weeks ago the Spring AP Environmental Science Class at Central High School had hoped to launch a floating habitat and found that additional buoys were needed. The habitat is an experiment to see if the nutrient intake by installed plants in the little habitat would help to remove algal growth in the lake.

Last month the floating habitat was launched again to see if the idea works, according to Ruth Anne Hanahan the Adopt A Watershed Coordinator with the University of Tennessee.

"We'll keep the Floating Habitat in for at least a month on a trial period," she told The Focus. Hanahan said the ducks have taken to the float and already laid eggs on it.

"The intent was not exactly to support the duck population but there is certainly no way we can discriminate," she said, adding that the plants aboard the float appear to be struggling but that they may be riding too high in the



Barc Johnson and Riley Cadwell, Environmental Science students at Central High School, give a thumbs up for a successful launch of a Floating Habitat in the Fountain City Lake. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Anne Hanahan)

water for the roots and that sufficient rains might allow time for the roots to penetrate the fabric underneath.

"We will need a dry spell to see

if the plants do well. If not we'll remove the habitat and let the spring class of 2018 work on it," Manahan said.

The Environmental Science

Class is led by Jill Strating and Colleen McWilliams. Students who launched the habitat were Barc Johnson and Riley Cadwell.

Voters

interact with candidates at Expo

By Ken Lay

Voters in Knoxville and Knox County voters had the chance to meet dozens of candidates running in the 2017 city and 2018 county elections Thursday night at the Knoxville Expo Center.

Five of the nine city council seats are open this year due to term limits.

Two of the four candidates seeking the First District seat were present Thursday as Rebecca Parr and Greg Knox appeared. Andrew Wilson was absent. Stephanie Welch had campaign personnel at the event but she missed it due to a prior commitment.

Knox said he was pleased that so many candidates for the city and county elections turned out to meet voters. But he was disappointed with apparent voter apathy at last week's meet-and-greet event.

"We had a good turnout with

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Go Vote! Knoxville Aims to Increase Voter Turnout

By David Klein

Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero announced a new initiative Tuesday, June 27, to increase dialogue and voter turnout in this year's elections called Go Vote! Knoxville. The initiative will have six get-out-the-vote public meetings, one in each of the six city council districts. At these meetings, voters can interact with and get to know the candidates running for the five open city council positions from Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6.

During the meetings, the City of Knoxville and local businesses will provide pizza and snacks, and there will be family games. Rogero will attend along with current



Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero announcing the Go Vote! Knoxville initiative with 2017 city council candidates at the Public Works Service Center.

council members, and The Knoxville Election Commission will also be at the meetings to register new voters,

provide information, and demonstrate how to cast ballots on voting machines. Rogero talked about the

Go Vote! Knoxville initiative during her announcement. "We have 30 candidates running for five council seats

in the August 29 primary," Rogero said. "Today we're officially launching the Go Vote! Knoxville initiative. Go

Voter Knoxville will be bringing the candidates to you."

City officials will recognize the council districts that have the largest percentage turnout and the largest increase in voter participation compared with the 2009 City Council election, when there were also five seats up for election. "We're challenging each district to beat their own record of 2009 and outvote the other districts," Rogero said. "After the election is over, we'll recognize in some way the council district that turned out the highest percentage of voters as well as the district that increased turnout the most from 2009."

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