

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Tuesday, September 24, 2013**

Contact: Hanna M. Greer, Commissioners, 614/525-5848

## **COMMISSIONERS TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT COUNTY'S STRONG FINANCIAL POSITION AND MEET GROWING COMMUNITY NEEDS**

Today, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a permanent increase in the County's sales tax rate by one quarter of one percent. The Board also acted to temporarily increase the rate by one-quarter of one percent which will expire on December 31, 2018. Franklin County currently collects .75-percent of the County's total sales tax rate of 7-percent. The new rate will apply to all retail sales in Franklin County beginning January 1, 2014.

The portion of the sales tax collected by Franklin County remains lower than 47 Ohio counties at a time when Franklin County is the fastest growing county by population in the state of Ohio. Recognizing this population growth and associated increasing demands for county-provided services coupled with drastic reductions in state funding and lower than expected revenues, in February, Commissioners convened the Franklin County Budget and Economic Advisory Panel comprised of key financial experts and community leaders charged with analyzing the fiscal condition of the County's General Fund.

In August, the Panel concluded its work, presenting Commissioners with a report that affirmed that Franklin County is well-managed and recommended that the County take necessary action to protect the County's double-Triple A credit rating. The Panel did not evaluate the increasing needs of a growing community, including the need to spur job creation efforts or make future infrastructure investments such as the construction of a new Franklin County Jail and Morgue within the next two years.

In late-August, Commissioners announced that they would begin the public hearing process on a proposal to increase the County's Sales and Use Tax rate. Three public hearings were held and, following the final hearing this morning, Commissioners approved a change to the portion of the sales tax collected by the County from .75-percent to 1.25-percent effective January 1, 2014.

During the meeting, Commissioners acknowledged that Franklin County is a great place to live, has the 7<sup>th</sup> strongest regional economy in the nation, the second safest area for families with young children, and is considered one of the top five places with good jobs and cheap housing in the nation.

"Franklin County has worked hard to maintain a high quality of life for our residents despite receiving millions of dollars in state funding cuts and shrinking revenues," said Commission President John O'Grady. "I appreciate the cooperation of our fellow Franklin County office holders who have helped to keep the belt tight. We must now position Franklin County to be

able to serve our growing population by fostering job creation and delivering safety-net services to families, children, seniors, residents and businesses.”

Through this fiscal year, Franklin County received over \$41 million in state funding cuts while experiencing a \$2.2 million reduction in property tax collections, a reduction in the County’s public investment portfolio earnings from \$43.5 million in 2007 to an estimated \$8 million this year, slowed job growth and losses in the housing market. Commissioners have supplemented County agency budgets by drawing down County reserves to avoid layoffs and ensure critical services weren’t eliminated.

“Reestablishing our Economic Development Fund is an important step towards protecting our status as one of the top counties in the U.S.,” said Commissioner Paula Brooks. “We must help large businesses as well as address obstacles facing our small and medium enterprises as they are our real job engines. At the end of the day, making sure every resident who wants a job, has one, is the best social program we can provide.”

With cooperation from Franklin County’s elected officeholders, the County’s 2013 expenditures remain at 2008 levels. Additionally, over the past 4 years, Commissioners have reduced the Community Partnership Program by over 32-percent, consolidated services and facility locations, increased user fees and restrained the cost of the County’s Health Benefits Plan for employees while requiring them to pay a larger percentage of their health care.

Commissioner Marilyn Brown stated, “We’ve reached the point of doing less with less. There’s a level of service and social support below which a civilized society must not and will not go, and we have reached that point. This was not an easy decision but investing in our local safety net means being able to provide supportive services, workforce training and jobs for residents and is the right decision for our community.”

The increased sales tax rate has received support from community partners, the business community, and has been endorsed by the Columbus Dispatch.

###

For more information on the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, log on to: [www.franklincountyohio.gov/commissioners](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/commissioners)