

George and Martha Washington stage a tax revolt

George Washington (Roger Burger, Lake Havasu High School athletic director) and Martha Washington (Margee Chieffo of Lake Havasu Big Brothers/Big Sisters) staged a tax revolt event May 22 at the London Bridge.



While supporters chanted "Save our sports" and "Keep our taxes in town," and pyrotechnic devices fired simulated cannon shots, General Washington/Burger was rowed across London Bridge Channel to help publicize the Arizona state income tax credit program.

Bringing to mind the classic Emanuel Leutze painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, Burger began his hazardous journey in the English Village on the eastern side of the bridge. Climbing into a small row boat, with sword held high, he was rowed across the channel to be greeted on the other side by well-wishers including State Senator Linda Binder, County Supervisor Buster Johnson, Lake Havasu Unified assistant superintendent Gail Malay, Lake Havasu High principal Kathy Cox, and many high school athletes and cheerleaders.

Lake Havasu High School athletics must be self-funding for the 2004-2005 school year, and the tax credit program gives local taxpayers a painless way to help. A May 21 editorial in our local newspaper promoted this tax revolt event and commented on the tax credit, saying: "The best part—the whole thing is FREE. Every dollar put into the tax credit program reduces the contributor's state income tax liability. This is not a donation, but a way to ensure that the taxes already being paid will go directly to aid Lake Havasu City school children."

You can participate in this tax revolt and help keep our tax dollars in Havasu by taking advantage of the tax credit program.

[More pictures of the tax revolt event](#)

[Tax revolt coverage from our local newspaper](#) (165 KB download)



Well wishers watch from London Bridge



General Washington makes his historic crossing



Arriving safely on the west shore, General Washington follows his army to the Javalina Cantina.

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Revolt By Boat: 'Million Dollar Tax Revolt' aims to raise money for local schools

By [Sharon Dunham](#)

Like a scene from a picturesque Revolutionary War movie, George Washington crossed a river in a rowboat with his supporters close behind in another boat. These modern-day patriots may have looked peaceful, but just like their counterparts centuries ago crossing the Delaware River, they were dead serious.

The cause this time wasn't a nation's freedom-it was keeping sports and other activities funded in the Lake Havasu Unified School District.

Decked out in patriotic tricorn hats and waving American flags, a crowd gathered on London Bridge on Saturday morning to watch a costumed Washington, in this case Lake Havasu High School Athletic Director Roger Burger, cross Bridgewater Channel. With him was his loyal partner, Martha Washington, played by former kindergarten teacher Margee Chieffo, the event organizer, who heads up the Big Brother Big Sister program.

In this Million Dollar Tax Revolt that will continue through the summer, organizers intend to sign up enough participants in the state tax credit program to give the school district \$1 million. The tax credit program allows taxpayers to designate money for local schools rather than sending it to Phoenix. Money can be given to either private or public schools, but Saturday's event was intended to raise money for the Lake Havasu Unified School District.

Sports teams particularly need financing after the governing board cut budgetary support in the wake of a pair of voter-rejected overrides in March. Supporters have until Aug. 1 to raise more than \$200,000 that would keep all levels of all teams playing at Lake Havasu High School.

To participate in the tax credit program, taxpayers fill out a basic form, indicating the recipient of their funds, such as the school, the activity, and even a specific student. They may also choose a category that would allow a building principal to funnel money where it is most needed.

A single person can designate up to \$200 and a couple filing jointly may designate up to \$250. When their state taxes are due in April, the amount they already paid to the program will either cover their liability, or help meet the liability. A tax credit is not a donation because it allows taxpayers to recoup the money when their taxes are due.

Taxpayers may also opt to have their tax credit money withdrawn in regular installments from their paychecks. By law, the money can be used only for extra-curricular or co-curricular activities.

After his boat landed in the shadow of the London Bridge, Burger called on students and parents crowded onto the balcony of the Javelina Cantina to participate in the tax credit program.

"If Havasuvians do not heed this call to action, we can never blame the tyranny of the state for a band that cannot play, races that will never be won, and songs that never will be sung," Burger said. "Dark times are ahead for our children. We have no choice but to come together and force a no cost \$1 million solution."

Mohave County Supervisor Buster Johnson, State Sen. Linda Binder, K-12 Foundation member Kathy Hodel, Assistant Superintendent Gail Malay, and High School Principal Katherine M. Cox joined in the plea to help students.

"I have faith in our community," Malay said. "Athletics will be saved. People understand the value of teamwork and physical exercise. When our kids walk across the stage at graduation, as they did Thursday, we want to know we have given them a well-rounded education."



*News-Herald Photos/
L.J. Frink
Bridgewater Channel
stood in for the
Delaware River on
Saturday morning
when Roger Burger
crossed the Channel
as Gen. George
Washington during a
Tax Revolt
ceremony. Burger
was joined in the
crossing by County
Supervisor Buster
Johnson, District 3,
sitting behind him,
and another
boatload of
dignitaries as the
London Bridge, a
product of Great
Britain, loomed
behind them.*

Mark Clark, an event volunteer, who is a LHHS graduate, said that while he understands that 1,200 taxpayers signed up for the tax credit program last year, supporters hope to double that number this year.

LHHS athletes turned out for the event, some saying they are afraid of losing sports, but were happy the community supports fund raising efforts.

"Sports keep kids out of trouble, it keeps them entertained and physically fit, and they're not as lazy," said sophomore Zack O'Neil, a football player.

His brother, Mike, a junior, worried about losing lower grade sports that give players the experience they need to play on higher level teams. "Without sports, kids are just going to get in trouble," he added.

And sophomore Maria Schmeling had an even more sobering thought, saying that if sports weren't offered, her parents will send her to a private school outside Lake Havasu City that does offer sports.

"Sports would fund my scholarships for college," said Schmeling, a soccer player and track participant. "Sports are something to do after school. It gives us a reason to get up and do something. Otherwise, a lot of kids would go home after school and just sit on the couch, instead of going running and being active."

She said she found many names on her mother's cell phonebook she will call about signing up for the tax credit program.

Sue Keith, president of the Lake Havasu City Education Association, and a fifth-grade Starline Elementary School teacher, said that raising \$1 million through the tax credit program is "doable. Sports are an important part of education. They teach students teamwork, improve their self-esteem and make them believers in themselves. Speech and drama accomplish the same things for kids."

Tax credit forms are available at the high school and at the district office, 2200 Havasupai Blvd. Representatives are available to explain the program at clubs and at businesses interested in signing up for the payroll deduction program.

Tax credit forms can also be mailed to the Lake Havasu High School Athletic Department, 2675 S. Palo Verde Blvd., Lake Havasu City 86403. Money for high school sports is needed by Aug. 1.

Other ways to donate money to the schools are:

€The K-12 Foundation, a non-profit organization that purchases requested supplies for the school district. Checks may be mailed to the K-12 Foundation, P.O. Box 2277, Lake Havasu City, 86405. For information, call Jim Day at 855-0047.

€The Athletic Scholarship Fund helps students pay the \$100 per student, per high school sport participation fee. To participate, call the high school athletic office at 855-4011, ext. 102.

€Help the athletic teams' Booster Club, which meets the second Monday of each month. Call Cali George at the high school, 855-4011 for information.

€Contributions can also be made directly to the Lake Havasu Unified School District for any purpose.

You may contact the reporter at sdunham@havasunews.com