

Tobacco tax, campaign contributions on ballot

By Sara Cline

Associated Press/Report for America

SALEM (AP) — Two measures the Oregon Legislature placed on the November 3 ballot for Oregonians to vote on include limiting campaign contributions and increasing tax on cigarettes, as well as creating a tax on electronic cigarettes.

Both have received widespread and bipartisan support, which proponents hope will help push the measures to victory.

A vote in favor of ballot Measure 108 would increase Oregon's cigarette tax by \$2 per pack — from \$1.33 to \$3.33 — increase the cap on cigar taxes to \$1 per cigar and add a 65 percent tax on e-cigarettes and vaping products, which are not currently taxed.

The funds from the tax increase would be used for public health programs including smoking prevention and cessation programs. The projected new annual revenue is about \$130 million.

Supporters of the bill include Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, state lawmakers and organizations such as the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems.

Brown said not only does she believe the measure would save lives and help people quit smoking, but it will also “ensure Oregonians can continue to access the health care they need to thrive” due to the increased funds.

All Democrats in Oregon's House and Senate, except for one, voted in favor of the tax.

“Ultimately, I'm tired of seeing my patients — too often the working poor who were targeted by big tobacco in their youth — die premature and painful deaths because of the impact of tobacco. This weighs on me every day,” said Rep. Rachel Prusak (D-West Linn), who is a nurse practitioner. “And it also ultimately weighs on the state — currently, the Oregon Health Plan spends roughly \$374 million a year just treating tobacco-related illnesses.”

According to the American Cancer Society, in 2020 it is estimated that 1,750 Oregonians will die from lung or bronchus cancer. Cancer, in general, is the leading cause of death in Oregon.

Out of the 22 Republicans in the House, Rep. Cheri Helt and Rep. Greg Smith were the only two who voted in favor of the tax.

During a committee session about the-then bill, Smith said he supported it because the people who would receive public assistance for health

care will likely end up paying for a portion of the tax themselves.

According to Oregon Secretary of State campaign finance records, the Yes for a Healthy Future/Oregonians for a Smoke Free Tomorrow political action committee has collected more than \$13.1 million in campaign contributions.

The only political action committees that filed opposition to the measure with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office was the Taxpayers Association of Oregon, whose leaders say the tax would negatively impact low-income consumers and small businesses selling the products.

Among states with the highest cigarette tax rate in 2019 were New York and Connecticut, which both tax \$4.35 per pack.

As of 2019, more than a dozen states including Oregon levied a tax rate ranging from \$1 to \$1.98 per pack. If the measure were to pass, Oregon would sit with at least ten other states, including Washington, whose tax rate for a pack of cigarettes is between \$2 and \$3.10.

Also on November's ballot is Measure 107 which, if voted in favor of, would amend the Oregon Constitution and allow for state, counties and cities to place limitations on political contributions and expenditures, require disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures and allow rules requiring campaigns to be transparent about who paid for political advertisements.

Currently, there is no limit in contributions to candidates or ballot measures. Other states without limits include Alabama, Nebraska and Utah.

In 1997, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that the state constitution's section, specifically regarding freedom of speech, prevents the Legislature from limiting campaign finance activity.

The measure has received widespread and bipartisan support, including Brown, state senators and representatives.

“A constitutional amendment must make it clear to voters and the courts that campaign contributions may be regulated and that the greatest transparency in campaigns is permissible,” Brown said. “My goal is to see lasting constitutional authority to regulate campaign finance in Oregon and to see reasonable limits put in place.”

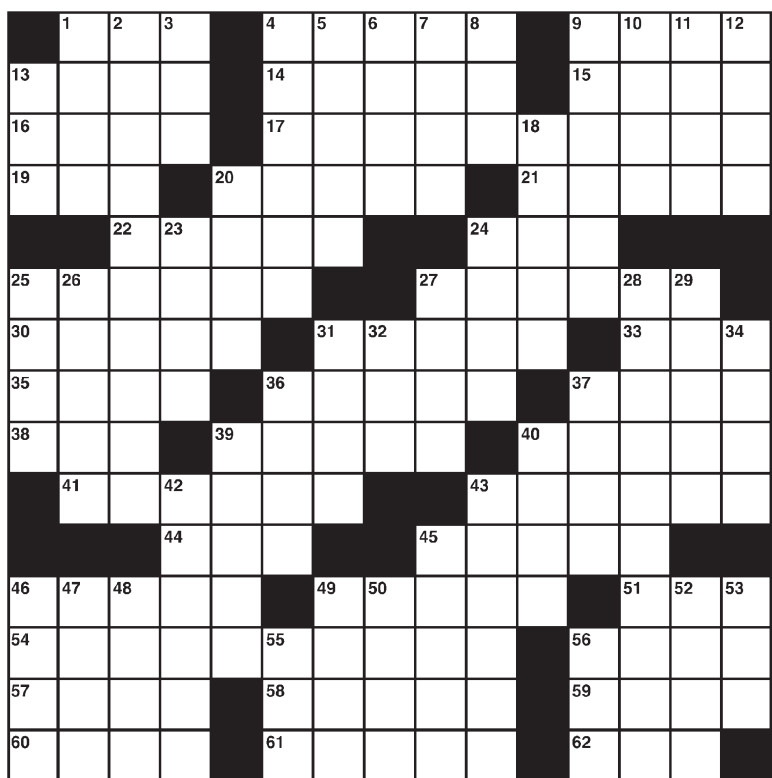
Kyle Markley, a Libertarian and frequent candidate for political office, filed his opposition to the measure saying that it would weaken Oregon's freedom of speech guarantees.

The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cleopatra's killer
 - 4 Climb
 - 9 Cain raiser
 - 13 “Guilty” or “Not guilty”
 - 14 Dickens' “A Christmas ___”
 - 15 Music's Lady ___
 - 16 “___ well that ends well”
 - 17 Bamboozled
 - 19 Change from brunette to blonde
 - 20 One of the vital signs
 - 21 Tenant's contract
 - 22 Mr. Gable
 - 24 Unknown John
 - 25 Tennessee team
 - 27 Frank
 - 30 Reveille's message
 - 31 Residence
 - 33 Tennis court divider
 - 35 Late July babies
 - 36 Wild felines
 - 37 Sandwich type
 - 38 “Inside Politics” network
 - 39 Cradle rockers, often
 - 40 Cut off
 - 41 Prose writings
 - 43 Umpire's cry
 - 44 Internet pop-ups
 - 45 Less than 5 feet tall
 - 46 Stadium
 - 49 Like a tightwad
 - 51 As pretty ___ picture
 - 54 Cash register operator
 - 56 Share a border with
 - 57 Vexes
 - 58 Ointment
 - 59 Escape
 - 60 SAT, for one
 - 61 Lazybones
 - 62 Man's nickname

- DOWN**
- 1 Supportive friend
 - 2 Choices
 - 3 Faux ___; blunder
 - 4 Scrubs
 - 5 Fill in window frame cracks
 - 6 Word with liberal or graphic
 - 7 ___ one's nerve; chicken out
 - 8 Large tree
 - 9 Shared the same opinion
 - 10 Statistics
 - 11 Suffix for percent or pack
 - 12 Created
 - 13 Upholsterer's item
 - 18 “Home ___”; blockbuster 1990 film
 - 20 Window part
 - 23 Damsel
 - 24 Root beer brand
 - 25 Powder
 - 26 “Goodnight, ___”
 - 27 Swindles
 - 28 Sure to happen
 - 29 Shortstop Jeter
 - 31 Goals
 - 32 Dangerous viper
 - 34 ___ up; shredded
 - 36 Big name in potato chips
 - 37 Frankfurt fellow



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

— Last Week's Puzzle Solved —



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- 39 As ___ a wet hen
- 40 Word in a red octagon
- 42 Least loony
- 43 Salt container
- 45 Begin a tennis game
- 46 “Be that ___ may...”
- 47 Uncommon
- 48 BPOE folks
- 49 Not indecent
- 50 Satan's realm
- 52 Filed charges against
- 53 Dined
- 55 Series for Jorja Fox, once
- 56 Near the rear of a plane

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