

Atiyeh still undecided on tax reform issue

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

Republican gubernatorial challenger Victor Atiyeh refused Tuesday to either support or condemn Oregon's controversial property tax limitation measure, saying there was still enough time for him to make a decision on the issue.

Speaking at a meeting of the Eugene Rotary Club, Atiyeh said the measure is a "crossroads" for the state, but refused to lend his support to its purpose.

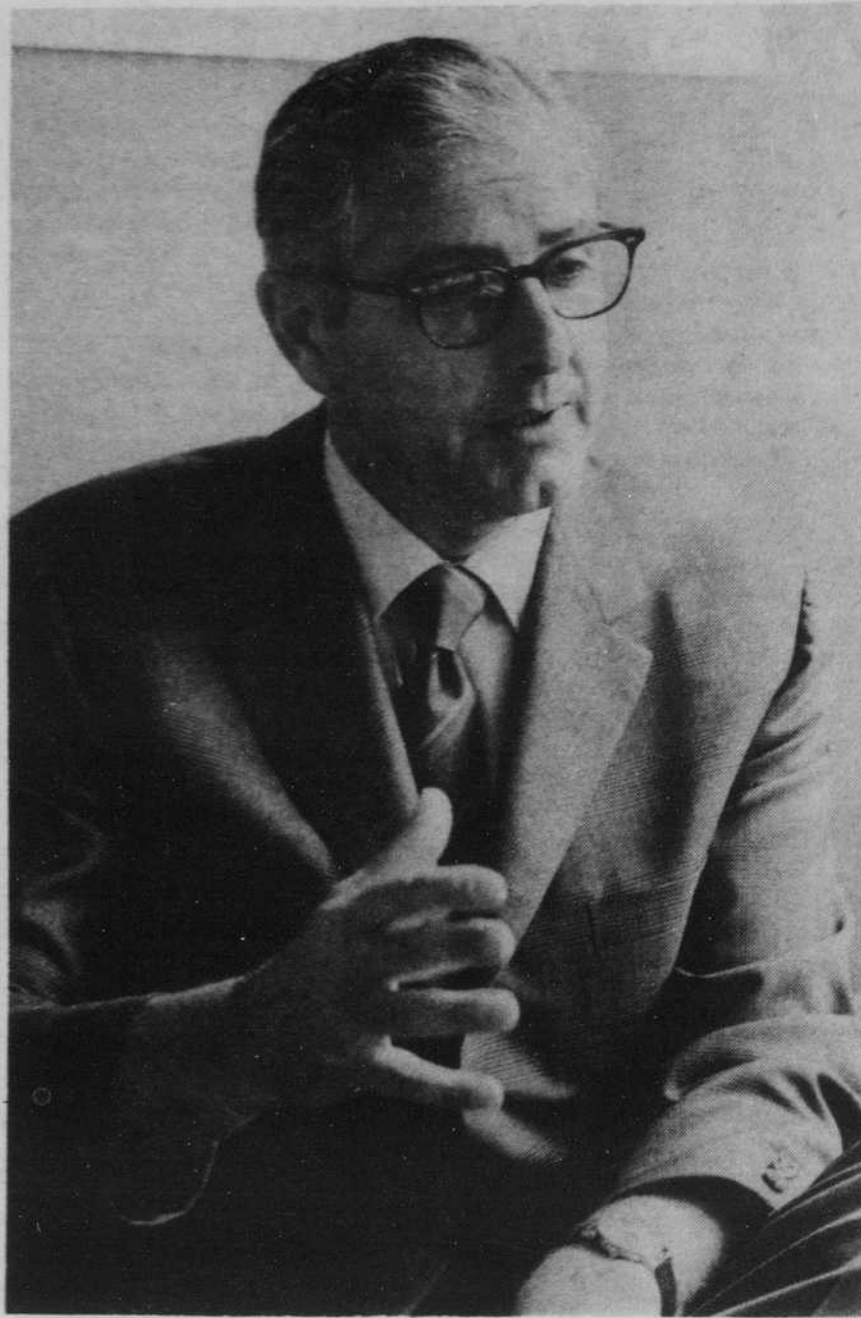
"I don't think that it is important that I come out on either side of the measure right now," Atiyeh said. "We have until Nov. 7, so why should I rush into a decision

without all the facts?"

The tax limitation measure did, however, represent a nationwide problem that must be addressed by the governor of Oregon almost immediately, Atiyeh said.

"I find it very interesting that, not so much the number of measures that are going to be on the November ballot, but the number of controversial ballot measures before the state right now," he said. "There is real unrest growing in the state, but this is a sign that people are trying to find their way out of it."

Whether Atiyeh would lead the voters out of their unrest remains to be seen. Although Governor Bob Straub said last week he would work vigorously against any



Victor Atiyeh

property tax limitation, Atiyeh has yet to take a firm stand on the issue.

Because he hasn't taken a stand doesn't mean he isn't thinking about the measure, Atiyeh said. As the campaign progresses, Atiyeh has been forming an alternative measure to the tax limitation measure that will probably be implemented if he is elected, he said.

"What I am thinking about is what will happen if this measure passes," he said. "That's what we're looking at right now."

Atiyeh sharply criticized Straub for condemning the tax limitation measure while trying to maintain a record of tax reform during his administration.

"There has been no real leadership on property tax relief for the past four years," Atiyeh said. "And now he's (Straub) going to try to tell us that he has been a friend of the state's taxpayers. If he does I'll be able to clearly show by our records that he hasn't and isn't a leader on tax reform."

It would be "hypocrisy" for the state legislature to call a special session to try to deal with the tax limitation problem, Atiyeh said. A compromise measure on the tax issue would only compound matters during the heat of a campaign, he said.

"I think that we don't know what's going to happen on this measure," he said. "But whatever happens, a governor is going to

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Center bonds challenged, Group asks for recall

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

Despite an overwhelming victory for the Eugene Civic Center project last month, some city residents don't like their tax dollars going for the construction of a building that may just be empty after November.

According to Louis "Frank" Bonson, a Eugene building contractor, there are a handful of reasons why the civic center should not be built. One of those reasons is the impending tax limitation measure.

The project was approved by a 3-2 margin during the June 27 special election. Although several school district budget levies were defeated, the civic center bond sale was almost the only tax-related measure passed in the election.

But that should not be taken as a voters' mandate, Bonson said at a news conference Tuesday. The

\$18.5 million project is following closely on the heels of a statewide tax revolt that could ruin plans for year-round use of the building.

"There is every reason to believe that, in the November election, Oregon voters will follow the lead of Proposition 13 in California and vote to severely reduce property tax levies," Bonson said.

Estimates of the amount of city money that could be lost if the tax limitation measure is passed run as high as 40 percent of operating revenue. If that happens, the civic center could become just another large, empty "luxury item," Bonson said.

"Will we have to lay off police and firemen to pay the civic center cost?" he asked.

Because the center will only benefit a few theater patrons, Bonson, Toni Nathan, head of the city's Libertarian Party, and several area residents have filed an initiative petition with the city council to prevent the sale of the

civic center bonds.

That petition may not get into the hands of its supporters, however. City Attorney Joyce Benjamin said Tuesday morning the petition is not authorized by state law and cannot be circulated.

Citing a 1972 Oregon Supreme Court decision based on a similar situation in Yamhill County, Benjamin said that state law does not allow bond issues to be recalled once they have been approved by voters.

The petitions cannot be circulated without a ballot title, Benjamin said, and the city will not prepare a title for the group's petition.

Why is Bonson and his group fighting the civic center project after the election?

"That's a real good question," he said. "I should stand a lot of blame for that. But I think the city fathers should stand a lot of blame for getting us into something they didn't know we were getting into in the first place."

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