

License fee boost: almost a good idea

We'd rather like to endorse Ballot Measure 3, which would double license fees for most private vehicles from \$10 to \$20 per year.

However, in good conscience, we can't.

Generally, the Emerald supports the imposition of use fees: those that offset the costs of a public service by assessing those who benefit from the service. Vehicle licensing revenues, for instance, are constitutionally mandated for expenditure on streets and roads, police, parks and recreational, scenic and historical sites.

Indirectly, higher fees would also discourage—to a slight extent—unnecessary ownership and operation of private vehicles, which would be an environmental plus.

However, Measure 3 fails because it provides an across-the-board increase without regard for the type of private vehicle being operated.

The state taxes commercial vehicles, primarily trucks, on the basis of weight and distance traveled, a practice that compensates for the diversity of their impacts on our highways and ecosystems.

We feel a similar weighting formula should be applied to fees for private cars and trucks, using such factors as fuel efficiency, purchase or resale cost, engine size and vehicle design.

Some states, have established fee schedules that reflect some of the distinctions between a 40-mile-per-gallon compact and a gas-guzzling, four-wheel-drive.

We should wait until Oregon moves in such a direction before supporting license fee increases such as Ballot Measure 3.

Attack on deficit spending bad idea

Advisory Measure 12 brings the doubtful proposal of a Constitutional Convention to prohibit — by amendment to the U.S. Constitution — the practice of deficit spending except during a national emergency.

Twenty states have already passed resolutions calling for such a Constitutional Convention. Two-thirds of the states—34—must do so in order to initiate this amending process.

Both the specific amendment and the general idea of a convention are ill-advised.

A constitutional convention cannot be limited to a single topic, no matter what issue inspired the convocation. At the convention, the entire Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, would be open to change.

For 188 years, this nation has not encountered an issue sufficiently pressing to require a Constitutional Convention. A poorly constructed attack on deficit spending presents no good reason to change this tradition.

Deficit spending, although abused by politicians overspending, has long been recognized as a useful economic tool. A more appropriate answer to its abuse would be to change the politicians, not the basic, legal document of our country.

We urge you to vote "no" on Measure 12.

Put teeth in law

Passage of Ballot Measure 5 — the "denturist bill" — would have the laudable effect of allowing dental technicians to fit and produce dentures.

Present state law permits only dentists to fit dentures.

Based on the experience of Canadian provinces that have granted denturists this right, Measure 5 could significantly cut dentures costs for senior citizens. It could bring prices down from as high as \$600 to less than \$300 by breaking the dentists' monopoly of the skill.

Oregon dentists and the American Dental Association have dropped a bundle — more than \$350,000 — to campaign against this proposal, partly in fear of the profit-cutting precedent it would set nationally.

Their campaign has been one of self-interested deception, which includes a spurious claim that ill-fitting dentures cause cancer.

Denturists, however, would be fully qualified to perform their task. State certification as a denturist would require successful completion of professional exam after four years of school and on-the-job training or six years of practical experience.

Denturism is one of the best ideas to come around in a long time. Make it a reality by voting "yes" on Measure 5.



Balance needed

Experience during the last several years has demonstrated the value of extending internal checks among the branches of government like the one proposed by Ballot Measure 2.

That measure locks into the Oregon Constitution a provision for the state senate to approve appointments made by the governor. The senate has used this statutory power for decades; Measure 2 merely allows voters to write this principle into the state constitution.

Our support for the measure comes not from any personal distrust of Gov. Straub or any other state executive, it arises from the belief that no one person or branch of government should operate without restriction.

The idea of controlling government with a system of checks and balances derives from the federalist system of the U.S. Constitution.

As with any other governmental restriction, the provisions of measure 2 would prevent government, or one part of government, from accumulating too much power. We encourage voters to fix that idea into the Oregon Constitution.

Vote yes on Measure 2.

Appoint judges — yes on Measure 1

Ballot Measure 1 is an innovative judicial provision that safeguards voter control while insuring professional quality among judges with state-wide jurisdictions.

The measure would leave control of local judgeships with the local voters but allow for controlled appointments of Oregon Supreme Court, Appeals Court and Tax Court justices through a nominating commission and the governor.

When vacancies occur, the nominating commission (three lawyers, three lay representatives and the state's Supreme Court Chief Justice) would nominate several candidates to the governor, who would appoint one of the nominees.

After two years the judge would be able to succeed himself only with voter approval. A "no" vote would oust the justice, who would then be replaced by another appointment.

This system would prevent statewide judgeship races from growing into name familiarity contests, contests that favor the more visible and accessible Portland candidates.

The measure has one additional attraction. Once a judge has served for two years, his reelection depends on his record more than campaign wizardry and images.

Taken together, the provisions of Measure 1 still permit adequate voter control while stifling emphasis on campaign qualities that are irrelevant or damaging to a person's life as a judge.

We support Measure 1.

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