Taxpayers' union wants more relief

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

A plan to ease the burden of Oregon's taxpayers may not end efforts to place a new property tax limitation measure on the November 1980 general election ballot, says Tonie Nathan of the Oregon Taxpayers Union (OTU).

The plan, a tax rebate to homeowners and renters, is a step in the right direction, Nathan says, but it is a baby step and the OTU wants a giant step.

"This is just an appeasement," she says. "The measure was passed to take the edge off irate taxpayers."

The OTU, a newly-formed group that plans to fight for property tax limitation from coast to coast, wants a "genuine shaving of services and expenses" by state and local government, Nathan says.

The tax rebate plan was passed after lengthy debate and a flurry of counter proposals spawned by the tax revolt fever that swept the state last year. A year ago more than 200,000 Oregonians signed petitions to place a 1.5 percent property tax limitation measure on the November 1978 ballot.

Although that measure failed at the polls, Nathan and other OTU members think efforts by the Legislature to draft tax relief proposals have fallen short of the goal.

"This is just a shift from one tax to another," Nathan says. "The money lost through these taxes will be paid out of the income tax."

Real relief, she says, will put a ceiling on government spending and limit the amount of taxes the state can take as revenue each year.

"The OTU believes, in principle, that there should be some sort of ceiling on what government can spend," explains Nathan. "With a ceiling, government could live within a budget, but the way it is now there is not a limit on the size of government — tax-wise — and this measure doesn't put any limit on future assessments."

The tax measure repays state homeowners for up to $400 in local property taxes paid during the past year. State renters are also eligible for percentage rebates of rent they paid last year. The program is an extension of the Homeowners and Renters Relief Program instituted three years ago to ease the burden on taxpayers.

Nathan, also a member of the tax-conscious Oregon Libertarian Party, says a new petition to place a tax limitation measure on the November 1980 general election ballot is already circulating around the state. That measure will attempt to limit local property taxes to one percent of the 1975 assessed property value.

Eligibility expanded for student grants

By STEWART WRIGHT
Of the Emerald

An additional 70,000 students should receive Basic Educational Opportunity Grants (BEOG) next year, thanks to new regulations published by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW).

The new regulations liberalize eligibility requirements for independent, self-supporting students by providing more equitable deductions for assets and basic expenses.

"In addition to expanding the number of participants and reaching more at middle income levels, these amendments allow more than 600,000 students to receive increased awards," HEW Secretary Joseph Califano said.

Eligibility for a basic grant is determined by a student's need. Need is calculated on the basis of formulas developed annually by HEW and reviewed by Congress. These formulas are applied consistently to all applicants and take into account indicators of financial strength: income, assets, family size and unusual expenses.

In the case of dependent students, the assets and income of parents are considered as well as the assets of the applicant. For married students, the assets of his or her spouse are taken into account.

The actual amount of the BEOG is determined by using an "eligibility index," which is computed by formula, along with the cost of education at the institution.

The changes made in the regulations are:

- The amount of money that unmarried, self supporting students with no dependents can claim as basic expenses has been raised from $1,200 to $3,450. This amount can be deducted from the student's income in determining both eligibility and the amount of grants. It is adjusted each year to reflect increases in the overall cost of living.
- The assets of self-supporting students with dependents will now be assessed in the same way as the assets of parents of dependent students. The first $25,000 in net assets held by self-supporting students with dependents is no longer counted in determining eligibility or grant amount. Net assets in excess of $25,000 are assessed at just 5 percent of actual value in determining eligibility for such students. Previously, all assets for such students were assessed at 33 percent of actual value. Additionally, for an independent student with farm or business assets, the first $50,000 of that student's total assets are not counted in determining eligibiliy.

The new contribution schedules will affect students attending school from July 1, 1979 through June 30, 1980.