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Labor unions pan initiative aiming to limit public sector

By Frank Shaw
Of the Emerald

A initiative petition restricting hiring public employees and allowing private companies to contract on public sector jobs is drawing fire from state labor unions.

The initiative, which supporters hope will appear on the 1984 ballot, would amend the state constitution to "limit those public employees to those absolutely necessary and thereby protect and advance the enterprise resources within the state."

Doug Crooks, communications director for the Oregon Public Employees Union, says the proposal should be renamed the "government for sale" petition because it would put state services up for sale.

"What you end up with is a huge pork barrel," he says.

The proposed amendment would increase government graft because the legislators would make the decisions on which jobs are contracted out, Crooks says.

The petition's proponents, including Associated Oregon Industries and the Portland

Chamber of Commerce, say private companies could perform state services more efficiently than government agencies.

"If the services can be done more cost effectively by private enterprise, they should be," Crooks says.

By computing cost effectiveness over a long period, the likelihood of companies dropping formerly public sector-operated jobs after a couple of years would be reduced, and state start-up costs would be avoided, Crooks says.

If the petition gathers enough signatures to go on the 1984 ballot and pass, it will be phased into effect in 1985. Crooks says as many as four out of five jobs of non-elected officials could be contracted out if the bill passes.

Donna Glathar, a University Library staff member and assistant district OPEU director, says the petition would affect the University faculty and staff and employees around the state.

While she admits there are places at the University where it might be cost effective to have services contracted out, Glathar says the petition is not the answer.

Alan Brom, a University custodian and OPEU member, says the petition ultimately would raise the taxpayer's burden and increase service disruptions to students.

Jack Kalinowski, a lobbyist for AOI, a group supporting the petition, says "that's a typical reaction of someone who has not read the petition."

He says the petition would not affect higher education.

The petition would require the government to identify all expenditures and the Legislature to grant permission before they could hire new employees, Kalinowski says.

"The important thing to remember is that it (the petition) doesn't require anything to be contracted out — except construction," Kalinowski says.

State employees' fears that they will be laid off are groundless, he says. "Productivity will be greater than ever before."

Correction

The field of candidates for the post of vice president for administration and finance has not been narrowed to seven finalists as was reported in Wednesday's Emerald. University Pres. Paul Olum said Wednesday.

Olum said at his press conference Tuesday that the search committee was to the point where they were choosing "semi-finalists." The statement was inadvertently reported as "seven finalists."

The field of semi-finalists for the position vacated by Ray Hawk won't be narrowed until the middle of March, Olum said.

Appeals court upholds strict ban on pistols

CHICAGO (AP) — The Illinois Appellate Court on Wednesday upheld Morton Grove's strict year-old ban on handguns, saying it was the kind of local control envisioned by the framers of the state constitution.

The decision by the three-judge panel affirms last year's ruling by Judge Albert Green of the Cook County Circuit Court, who found the ban was within the "reasonable exercise of the village's police power." The ordinance also was upheld recently by the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The ordinance in the northern Chicago suburb of 26,000 people took effect Feb. 1, 1982, and was the nation's first ban on citizen possession of handguns.

The ordinance has been challenged by some Morton Grove residents who contended it infringed on the rights of individuals to "keep and bear arms" as guaranteed in the 1970 Illinois constitution.

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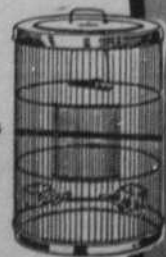
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