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Politeness greets sales tax plan

SALEM (AP) — Backers of two sales tax measures displayed their wares Monday to the House Revenue Committee, drawing polite but noncommittal reactions.

It was the tax-writing panel's first hearing on sales taxes, and the fact that a hearing was held on the issue was some news in itself. The last time Oregon voters got a chance at a sales tax measure, in 1969, they crushed it 8-to-1.

Most lawmakers since have kept the subject politically off-limits in a state that's one of only five in the nation without a sales tax.

Backers of the two sales tax proposals aired used property tax relief as their selling point.

Reps. Tony Van Vliet, R-Corvallis, and Peter Courtney, D-Salem, have drafted a 4 percent sales tax plan they want submitted to the voters in November.

Their bill, HB2001, would earmark the \$400 million estimated annual tax revenue for local schools to offset property taxes.

"We're talking about futuristic tax reform that will carry us into the next century," Van Vliet said. Courtney said the property tax is "overload-

ed" as the main money source for schools and other local governments. He said there's a serious threat that voters will pass a drastic property tax limit, such as one that failed narrowly at the polls last November, if the Legislature doesn't do something about the problem.

A coalition of local governments advocates having the state pay 50 percent of homeowner property taxes, with equivalent relief to renters, from proceeds of a sales tax.

On Tuesday, a coalition of businesses and individuals will outline its proposal for a 5 percent sales tax to be used to offset both income and property taxes.

Republican Rep. Bill Markham of Riddle, a Revenue Committee member who served in the 1969 Legislature that put a sales tax on the ballot, suggested Monday that the panel might be wasting its time.

He said the minority Democrats used the issue as a weapon against Republicans in campaigns the next year. But Van Vliet said he doubted if the sales tax was a key issue in many races.

Demo horses line up at presidential starting-gate

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Twenty-one years after he became the first American to orbit the Earth, Sen. John Glenn rocketed through six New Hampshire living rooms on a mission to organize support for the 1984 presidential primary.

But this time he wasn't first. Five fellow Democrats have beaten him to the mark, tussling over a shrinking supply of state party activists available to lend a hand in the earliest state primary.

"I don't think the American people or the people in New Hampshire really want four-year presidential campaigns," the Ohio senator said Sunday during his first visit since August. "We're marching to our own drummer on this thing."

Former Vice President Walter Mondale, who announced his candidacy Monday, and four other Democrats already have hired promoters, made frequent appearances and sent out mass mailings. Glenn's week-old state staff may find few unturned stones in this state of just 133,000 Democrats.

"The candidates go by the same people's living rooms and have a cup of tea and try to convince them to go along," says Executive Councilor Dudley Dudley, the top Democrat in state office. "They're all sort of vying for some of the very same people."

The man who has visited the most often, Sen. Alan Cranston of California, has the most to show for his efforts. Three

weeks ago, during his ninth trip to the state in a year, he issued a list of 42 prominent New Hampshire backers.

Next in early strength, says J. Willcox Brown, the state party's national committeeman, are Sen. Gary Hart of Colorado and Mondale, followed by Sen. Ernest Hollings of South Carolina and former Florida Gov. Reubin Askew.

Here's a cute tip on a new hobby

ASOTIN, Wash. (AP) — Rancher Bob Weatherly is the kind of guy who hates to throw anything away. He saves everything. Including about 200 animal skulls that gently swing from the branches of an old Black Walnut tree.

"There aren't too damn many other things you can do with a skull. I'd see a skeleton every once in awhile in the pasture, and it seemed like a shame not to do something with them," Weatherly said.

As director of the Asotin County Historical Society, Weatherly, 61, often treks across the southeastern Washington area to look for memorabilia.

Along the way, he has discovered skulls.

'Merde, diz iz not zee Zeine'

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — French explorer Jacques Cousteau was in the Brazilian capital Monday to meet Pres. Joao Figueiredo and discuss the continuation of his trip down the Amazon River.

The famed oceanographer began his first trip down the steamy jungle river last June in the northern city of Belem. His ship, the Calypso, ended the voyage late last year.

Cousteau has received government approval to continue his studies, but it was not immediately known when the next voyage would begin.

The explorer and his crew conducted ecological and biological studies along parts of the 3,915-mile Amazon and its tributaries. The Amazon is the world's largest remaining river basin and is still largely unexplored.

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