

Marijuana initiative fails to make November ballot

By Paul Ertelt
Of the Emerald

Petitioners for the Oregon Marijuana Initiative failed to collect enough valid signatures to get the measure on the ballot, but measures to reinstate the death penalty, establish a state lottery and limit property tax will come before voters November 6, Secretary of State Norma Paulus announced Friday.

The marijuana initiative, which would have eliminated all penalties for possession and cultivation of marijuana for "personal consumption," fell short of the 63,521 verified signatures needed to place the measure on the ballot.

Only 59,502 signatures were verified as being from properly registered voters, said a spokesperson for the state elections division.

Petitioners failed to get a similar measure on the ballot in 1982. But eight initiative measures and one referral from the state Legislature go to the voters.

The referral is a joint house resolution to change the minimum requirements for recalling a public official.

The initiative measures, if approved by the voters, will:

- amend the state Constitution to limit real property tax,
- create a citizens' utility board to represent rate payers at hearings to increase utility rates,
- amend the constitution to establish a state lottery to finance economic development,
- establish statutory provisions for the operation of the lottery if the amendment above passes,

- exempt death sentences from constitutional guarantees against cruel and vindictive punishment,

- require the death penalty or imprisonment for aggravated murder,

- revise numerous criminal laws concerning police power, evidence and sentencing, and

- add regulations for disposing of waste containing naturally occurring radioactive isotopes.

Because of insufficient signatures, the elections division last week rejected measures that would: cut off voter

registration 20 days prior to elections, ban state funding of abortions, and require that state employees receive wages and benefits comparable to those in similar jobs in private industry.



Emerald file graphic

Oregon pioneer of petitioning

By Shannon Kelley
Of the Emerald

Petitions — many people avoid them while many respond and sign them. Some people may even need to check a list to see if they've already signed a certain one.

This year more petitions have been circulated in Oregon than in any year since the 1930s, says Greg McMurdo, deputy secretary of state. Eight initiative petitions have garnered enough signatures to be placed on the November 6 ballot.

McMurdo says Oregon has taken advantage of the initiative process more often than most other states. In 1902, Oregon became the first state to use an initiative process for state measures, though many individual counties started the process earlier. Since then, Oregonians have exercised this right 240 times, he says.

As part of the "people's power movement," the initiative process was introduced by William U-Ren and the Progressive Party, McMurdo says. It was called the Oregon System then, and most states have copied the process in one form or another, he says. The direct primary (1904) and the recall provisions (1908) came about through initiatives.

There are three types of statewide ballot measures, McMurdo says. The initiative places a new measure on the ballot through petitioning. The referendum refers a set

measure back to the voters for amendments or repeal. Also, the Legislature can refer a new measure to the voters.

This is the first year since 1972 that a referendum has been attempted. The premiere example, Ballot Measure 1, would amend minimum requirements for the recall of public officeholders.

Getting a measure on the ballot is easier in Oregon than in most states, McMurdo says. The number of required signatures is the lowest in the nation, and the state allows two years for signature gathering.

The number of required valid signatures varies from year to year and with the type of initiative, McMurdo says. To create or amend a state statute, 6 percent of the total votes cast in the last governor's race is needed. Amending the state constitution takes 8 percent.

But many more signatures must be gathered to account for signatures that are invalid because the signers were not registered to vote or have moved or died. McMurdo tells petitioners to expect a 10- to 15-percent margin of error.

The petitions are first counted by the state and then sent to respective counties for verification of validity.

McMurdo says that although petitions are allowed two years to circulate, most don't reach the necessary total until near the deadline, which was July 6 this year.

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