

Anti-sales tax fight begins

SALEM (AP) — Several Democratic Party leaders formally launched a campaign Wednesday to defeat a sales tax measure that goes to the voters at a Sept. 17 election.

State Democratic Chair Judy Carnahan of Klamath Falls told a news conference the party has formed the No Sales Tax Committee to fight the plan, which is supported by some key Democrats in the Legislature — including Senate President John Kitzhaber of Roseburg and House Speaker Vera Katz of Portland.

Carnahan, a former state senator, said Oregon Democrats have been opposed to the sales tax for 50 years and that the party's position against the latest plan is an expression of grassroots opposition.

But Kitzhaber and Katz said the development only points out that Democrats are divided on the issue. Lawmakers of both major parties supported the tax plan, they noted.

Katz said the sales tax isn't a partisan issue and that it's "unfortunate the party did not wait for an open debate on the matter" as the election campaign develops further.

Party leaders supporting the 5 percent tax plan, which will go before voters Sept. 17,

believe it's the method to stabilize school funding, a goal which all Oregon Democrats support, Carnahan said.

The disagreement over the sales tax within the party reflects the same disagreement among voters, she added.

Gilbert Campbell, an Albany attorney who will head the anti-sales tax committee, said the tax "represents a major shift from those most able to pay to those least able to pay."

He added that the sales tax will hurt school districts, which it is aimed at helping, by reducing the growth rate in a school district's property tax base and limiting the number of local elections at which school districts can raise money.

The Democrats' alternative to the sales tax will include their "homestead exemption" plan, which calls for exempting the first \$25,000 of a home's value from property taxes, said Sen. Jan Wyers, D-Portland.

Wyers said revenue to make up the drop in property taxes would have to come from "a mix" of other sources, including the income tax.

Atiyeh quiet about business trip

SALEM (AP) — Gov. Vic Atiyeh left Wednesday for a 1½-day trip to an undisclosed part of the country to try to woo a new business client to Oregon.

Before departing, Atiyeh was tight-lipped about the nature of the trip, saying that the company involved had asked him not to reveal any details.

At his regular weekly news conference

earlier in the day, the governor declined to say even in general terms what part of the country he was headed for.

However, Atiyeh said that "more capital investment, more jobs" for Oregonians will be at stake in the negotiations.

"It will be a substantial number of jobs" if Oregon is chosen, the governor said.

United refuses to renew talks

CHICAGO (AP) — United Airlines on Wednesday rejected a call to resume talks with its striking pilots, dashing hopes for a quick settlement in a walkout that has crippled the nation's largest air carrier for nearly three weeks.

United said in a statement that it had informed the National Mediation Board it would not attend a proposed Thursday meeting with mediators and the Air Line Pilots Association in Washington D.C.

Representatives of the 5,000 striking pilots already had agreed to the meeting. The board's call to resume talks, under federal law, was a request rather than an order. The board had made the request on Tuesday.

United said in a mailgram to the board that its position on a back-to-work agreement, the remaining sticking point in the strike, had not changed.

The company said it "will not bargain" with the pilots' union concerning the status of three employee groups honoring picket lines.

United said those groups — flight attendants, management pilots and 500 newly-trained United pilots who have not started working — are out of the pilot union's jurisdiction.

Goldschmidt urges tax revision

PENDLETON (AP) — Former U.S. Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt, expressing hopes that tax revision would help attract industry to Oregon, said Wednesday he will vote for the sales tax next fall.

Goldschmidt made the comment during a question-and-answer session with members of the Pendleton Downtown Association. He visited Eastern Oregon on a week-long tour that he says will help him decide whether to run for governor on the Democratic ticket next year.

Goldschmidt, a Nike Inc. executive and former Portland mayor, says he will announce his decision by July 4.

The sales tax vote, Goldschmidt said, will be

the first chance for Oregonians to change the tax structure since 1974. If it is defeated, he said, it will send negative signals to business.

If the measure is defeated, the next governor and legislature will have to "come right back" with another tax revision plan, he said.

Goldschmidt said education is the largest industry in Oregon, and while that speaks well for the state's emphasis on education, "it doesn't say much for our economy."

Oregon still doesn't have an agenda for attacking its economic problems, Goldschmidt said. He said the state needs to concentrate on a short agenda and "do the things that are critical very well."

Two plead guilty in waste case

(AP) — Two employees of a Springfield railcar repair company have been fined \$2,500 each in a case involving the disposal of hazardous wastes.

U.S. Magistrate Michael Hogan imposed the fines Tuesday against Richard Taggart, 33, of Springfield and Keith Egan, 36, of Pleasant Hill.

The men, employees of Evans Railcar Division, pleaded guilty to making false statements to a state Department of Environmental Quality inspector.

Taggart said May 7 he lied when he told a DEQ investigator last June that no hazardous waste material had been stored at the business

other than what the investigator could see in his inspection.

Egan, Taggart's supervisor, pleaded guilty April 30 to aiding and abetting Taggart by failing to tell the DEQ investigator that "certain waste solvents" had been moved off the premises.

The DEQ investigation was prompted by a telephone call last July reporting the dumping of hazardous waste, officials said.

Both the DEQ and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency looked into the company's practices for disposing flammable solvents used to clean painting equipment.

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