

# Measure 6 debate raises temperature

By Mary Courtis  
Of the Emerald

The moral and economic impacts of Ballot Measure 6 on the state of Oregon were questioned and debated Wednesday night at a Measure 6 debate forum sponsored by the ASUO Women's Task Force.

Ballot Measure 6 is the controversial amendment to the state's constitution that would prohibit state-funded abortions. The issue is one that arouses strong feelings among its supporters and opponents and attracted a large audience to the debate.

Speaking in favor of Measure 6, Kit Greerty of Taxpayers for Responsible Government questioned the legitimacy of paying for abortions with government funds.

"Why should taxpayers foot the bill for private choices?" she said.

Greerty also argued that abortions were too readily available to women, that access to state-funded abortions discourages birth control use, and that these considerations had especially disturbing consequences for teenagers.

"Everyone is deeply concerned over teenage pregnancies," she said. "But if abortions are too readily available, then we are putting our stamp of approval on sex and abortion. We can't provide abortions as a quick fix."

Passage of Ballot Measure 6 would help to correct these problems, she said.

"When we restrict funding to abortion, then women will choose to use traditional forms of birth control," Greerty said.

Opponents of Ballot Measure 6 can also be faulted for making claims that are "callous, discriminatory and just plain untrue," Greerty said.

"They have spent \$100,000 sensationalizing the plight of rape and incest victims," she said. "And these women make up only one percent of the women who seek abortions."

"We have to ask ourselves if we are using our tax dollars in the most responsible way to help poor women," Greerty said. "Is it legitimate to say 'better dead than fed' when we are talking about human lives?"

Ruth Leibik, a Planned Parenthood representative working to defeat Ballot Measure 6, took a different stand on the issue.

"Ballot Measure 6 will have no effect on women who are capable of paying for their abortion," she said. "Instead, Ballot Measure 6 is a direct attack on poor women who are complete-

ly dependent on the state for their medical care. The state is not in the business of providing abortions for everyone. Only women who have been found categorically and medically needy are eligible for state-funded abortions."

The state should continue to maintain its neutrality by funding a woman's three options (adoption, abortion and delivery) equally, Leibik said.

"If Ballot Measure 6 passes, poor women will no longer have the same constitutional rights as women who are able to pay for their abortion," Leibik said.

Leibik also looked at the issue of teenage pregnancy differently.

"For teenagers who choose abortion as an option, 90 percent receive abortions through private rather than public funding," she said. "The passage of Ballot Measure 6 will not influence the number of unplanned pregnancies, increase birth control use or deter sexual activities. Rather, people will be more tempted to resort to back alley abortions or other dangerous alternatives."

Before abortion became legal, abortion was the number one cause of death among women in America, Leibik said.

Instead of attempting to legislate morality or deny women access to contraceptives and abortion, more education, greater openness and support of organizations like Planned Parenthood are more productive ways to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies, Leibik said.

Leibik answered that, "studies indicate that 97 percent of single mothers keep their babies and do not put them up for adoption."

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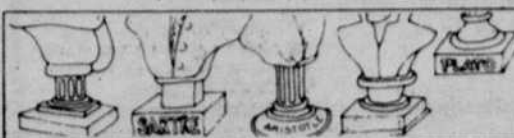
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