

Measure 9 raises controversy over tax rates

By **Tonnie Dakin**
Of the Emerald

If Ballot Measure 9 is passed in today's election, the Oregon Constitution would be amended to set property taxes at a maximum rate, changing the future of Oregon's economy.

The measure would repeal the former method of determining tax bases for units such as school districts, counties, and cities. These units would be enabled to levy taxes based on either the lesser of the 1985 rate or a percentage limitation.

In 1987, the property tax rate would be limited to the lesser of the 1985 rate or 2 percent of the assessed value. In the following years, this rate would become the lesser of the 1985 rate or 1.5 percent of the assessed value.

This amount of the tax rate can be increased only by a vote of the people, and elections can be held only twice a year.

Opponents of the measure believe it is unfair because it will jeopardize school districts, public services and state programs.

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—Margaret Hallock

forgets about the consequences," said Dr. Margaret Hallock, economist and director of research at the Oregon Public Employees Union.

"It's so poorly drafted that it doesn't account for all of its effects," she added.

One effect of the measure is that it would repeal Oregon schools' only measure of stability, their tax base, she said. In addition, there is no plan formulated to equalize the losses the school districts would suffer under the measure, Hallock said.

"It cuts revenues but it doesn't solve the problem of unstable schools," she said. "Uniformity of quality educa-

tion would be impossible under Ballot Measure 9," she said.

Tonie Nathan, Lane County representative to the state committee, disagrees with this.

"They (the schools) have plenty of excess money," Nathan said. "There are plenty of things they can cut and still give a good education."

In addition, if Ballot Measure 7 was passed along with Ballot Measure 9, schools would be able to receive a portion of their support from a 5 percent sales tax, she said.

Nathan believes there is a growing bureaucracy in schools because many of the employees within the school system are not teachers, she said.

"There's a lot of extra help that doesn't need to be there," Nathan said.

Hallock believes there is a consensus in Oregon to stabilize the schools, and proponents of the measure are not considering this, she said.

"The proponents of this measure, in my opinion, do not care about the quality of education, they care about cutting property taxes," Hallock said.

In addition to restricting school funding, the measure would restrict funding for local services such as health, library, and bus services, as well as police and fire departments.

"To just blatantly take the meat ax and say we're not going

to fund programs (is ridiculous)," Hallock said.

Nathan believes that by cutting property taxes, the money that is earned in the private sector will stay there, producing a boom in the economy, she said.

"Another thing about (Ballot Measure) 9 that I think is good is that when you cut taxes you leave more money in the pockets of those who make it," Nathan said.

Although similar measures have been put on the ballot and defeated five times in the past eight years, Nathan believes this measure will pass.

"It's less restrictive than the other ones," she said. "Last time it rolled back the rates to 1980... now it's rolling them back to 1985."

"Each time it was barely defeated," Nathan added. "It passed in (almost) every county in Oregon except Lane County," she said.

"If we wake up on November 5th and Measure 9 is passed, this state will never (survive)," Hallock said.

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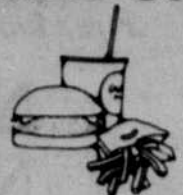
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