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Statewide election on Tuesday

By B.J. Thomsen
Of the Emerald

Oregon voters will face the tough and controversial issues of nuclear waste disposal and school closures in Tuesday's statewide special election.

Oregon's fight to get the Hanford Nuclear Reservation removed from a list of sites being considered for a permanent federal nuclear waste repository will continue with state backing if voters support Ballot Measure 1.

The Hanford Nuclear Reservation is located in southeastern Washington near the Oregon border on the Columbia River.

The Oregon state Legislature voted unanimously to urge Oregon voters to pass the measure.

If passed, the measure will allow state officials to use whatever means within the law necessary to force the Department of Energy to comply with federal law.

The state believes the DOE is in violation of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, a law passed by Congress that established a process for selecting two sites for permanent disposal of the nation's nuclear waste. The act specifies one site is to be located in the eastern United States and the other in the western United States.

The state contends the DOE did not investigate sites that may be more feasible and less expensive to operate than Hanford. The measure further states independent experts were not used in studying possible sites. The National Academy of Sciences recommended specifically independent experts be used during the selection process.

Two other sites in the western United States, one in Nevada and one in Texas, also are being considered.

Ballot Measure 2, dubbed the school safety net measure, is designed to prevent all too frequent school closures, such as the one experienced by Estacada schools earlier this year.

The saftey net measure would allow school districts to levy property taxes to continue operation in the event of defeat of a tax increase for a school budget by the voters.

The measure gives school districts the authority to bypass the voters and levy the same amount of tax money as in the previous year to keep school doors open. Budget increases still would have to go before the voters.

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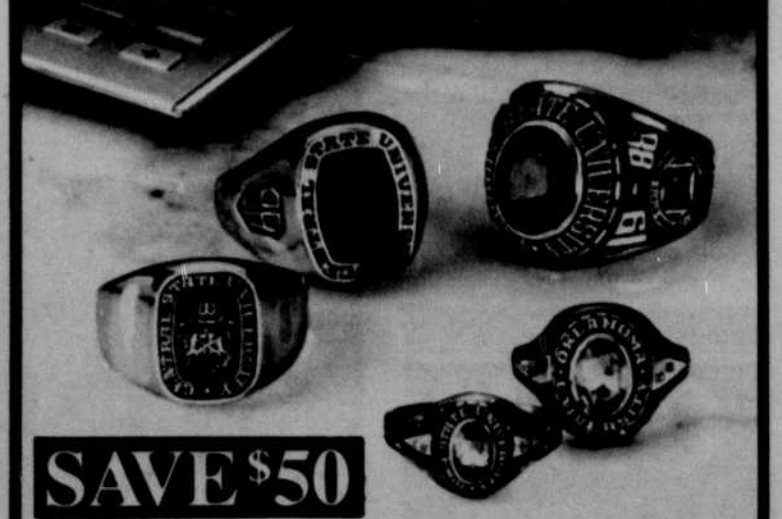

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