

## MEASURE 5

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drastic cuts in all levels of government services.

If Measure 5 passes, "We would never have last-minute elections to fund schools again," said Tom Dennehy, a co-author of the measure, which was put on the ballot by initiative petition.

Dennehy, a retired professor from Reed College, and the other co-author, a Portland-area businessman, designed the measure, believing Oregon's system of funding schools primarily through local property taxes is too burdensome for taxpayers and businesses. Property taxes make up 60 to 70 percent of public school funding.

The measure's supporters believe that the state's General Fund, made up mainly of income tax revenues, can take up any slack a cut in property tax funding for schools would cause.

Dennehy sees projected growth of Oregon's economy as being a sufficient replacement. "The influx of more people working in the state ... and the natural projected growth flowing into the state's General Fund will be enough," he said. "We are making first claim to that growth — for relief in property tax. ... We can have our cake and eat it too. It will be sufficient."

But the opponents of the measure, many of them education-oriented organizations, say those extra funds simply will not exist.

John Marshall, Oregon School Boards Association's director of legislative services, calls Dennehy's proposal "blue smoke in mirrors." He believes Measure 5 promises voters "a free lunch" that later will cost the state much.

"It will force the Legislature (next year) to make school funding a priority that it cannot make with out a drastic reduction in state-wide programs," he said. "We hope our campaigning will get the message out that it is not the free lunch that the proponents say it is."

To make their point, Marshall and other opponents point to Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's budget preview, released last week.

The preview, which projects budget figures for the 1991-93 biennium, predicts that of the state's \$5.5 billion in revenues for the General Fund, only \$214 million will be left after government spending. Of those extra funds a \$143 million safety margin is required to compensate for unexpected costs, leaving \$70 million for new programs.

During that same period, \$791 million would be required from the General Fund for schools if Measure 5 passes, according to the state-produced fiscal impact statement prepared for the measure.

By juxtaposing the \$70 million in leftovers with the \$791 million Measure 5 would require, opponents attempt to support their possible scenario of looming school funding crises and a gasping state budget.

The financial impact statement is one of several that will not accompany their respective measures on the Nov. 6 ballot because of missed certification deadlines by the Elections Division officials and subsequent court rulings last month.

## VOTE '90

### Measure 5

**Question: Shall constitution set limits on property taxes, and dedicate them to fund public schools and non-school government operations?**

### SUMMARY

- Amends constitution. Limits 1991-1992 property taxes for public schools to \$15, and property taxes for non-school government operations to \$10 per \$1000 of market value. Schools limit gradually decreases to \$5 per \$1000 in 1995-1996 and after. Government operations limit remains same.
- Limits do not apply to government assessments, service charges, taxes to pay certain government bonds. Assessments, service charges shall not exceed cost of making improvements, providing services.
- General Fund to replace, until 1996, school funds lost due to school limits.

## 4J

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\$500,000 and \$1 million.

According to Nguyen, the state government supplied 28.6 percent of the entire education budget during the 1988-89 biennium. Figures for 1989-90 are not all in, but preliminary estimates put state school funding at 28.7 percent - a negligible rise.

Heiligman said 4J operates on a \$96 million annual budget. Should Measure 5 pass, the district could expect to lose an estimated \$14-16 million in property taxes the first year. Forcing legislators' hands, Heiligman said, is not the way to go about fixing the educational system.

"It isn't all the Legislature's fault," she said. "They've referred plenty of things to voters, all of which have been turned down."

"As far as making (lawmakers) do something, putting a gun to their heads is not the best way. This is no solution. I'd rather see people work toward a positive solution."

The cost of Measure 5 would be extraordinary. According to a financial impact report authorized by the Elections Division, the measure would cost the state General Fund roughly \$250 million in 1991-92. That figure rises to over \$1.5 billion four years later.

"I don't see how the state can pay for it," Nguyen said. "We need another source of revenue."

Another solution, albeit a short-term one, would be to use the state reserve, roughly \$161 million, to help pay for the first year of Measure 5. But opponents reject such a plan.

"Suppose we use the reserve," Nguyen said. "What happens after that?"

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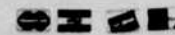
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