

MEASURE 11

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But opponents have taken aim at the measure, labeling it a "tool for the rich" because of the tax break and maintaining the measure would violate the separation of church and state. They see the tax break as a means for more wealthy families to pull their children and their tax dollars out of the public system, sending their kids to private schools instead.

"It's a Yuppie-Puppy tool," said John Marshall, director of legislative services for the Oregon School Boards Association.

"It would front the rich" in sending their children to private schools, he said, "leaving the public schools with the disabled, the socio-economically disadvantaged..."

But the measure's supporters see just the opposite.

"Poor people need educational choice the most," said Steve Buckstein, coordinator of Oregonians for Educational Choice, the group that petitioned to put the issue on the ballot.

"The rich can already afford to send their kids to districts with high property taxes or pay tuition at private schools," he said. "But the measure would empower poor people to send their kids where they want... They are the ones who need educational choice the most."

Measure 5 calls for the creation of an Educational Choice Fund, which would be used to replace the funds lost by the tax credits.

According to a fiscal impact statement produced by the state for the measure, school districts that lost students would pay into the Educational Fund \$1,500 for every private student living in the respective district. Proportional state and federal funding that would have gone to those districts would also be contributed to the Fund. The Educational Fund would then replace revenues lost by the tax credits give to parents with private school students.

Because about 3,700 of the 33,000 private students in the state learn at home, opponents of the measure claim it violates the separation of church and

state.

It would be a violation "Because home schoolers could claim tax credits, and a lot of them use some form of religious home schooling," said Jan Coulton, campaign coordinator of Oregonians for Public Education and Religious Liberty.

But backers of the measure point to a report produced by the Legislature's legal council in January that says such a measure would probably be constitutional.

"It's not excessive religious entanglement by the state," Buckstein said. "It's like the GI Bill, which gave entitlements to veterans to attend either public, private or religiously affiliated institution."

While opponents see church and state as an issue, they also draw attention to \$67 million the measure's fiscal impact statement calls for to replace funds lost to tax credits.

The statement estimates \$67 million would be needed during 1991-92 to replace lost revenue. The financial impact statement will not accompany

the Measure on the ballot because state officials failed to provide written certification of the statement before the required deadline.

Opponents claim the state's school system can't stand to absorb any financial losses. "Any amount of loss is too much," Coulton said.

But supporters say the sum is an amount the school system can afford.

"It would be a literal down payment for improving our educational system," Buckstein said. "It would take less than half of the automatic increase the year the measure would be enacted to make up the difference."

Buckstein says he looks to last year's budget figures to make that claim. Up to 80 percent of the state's local tax bases for schools have automatic 6 percent increases every year, and last year's basic school support from the state increased 14 percent. If those funds continue to go up next year at a minimum of 6 percent, the required \$67 million will be more than paid for, Buckstein maintains.

Aside from budget figures, Measure 11 supporters call on the human aspect of educational choice in their effort to persuade voters. "The answer is for people to take responsibility to do things for themselves," said Gene Lehman, founder of the Network for the Educational Choice Initiative. "The real key to success in any system is parental involvement. This is what you get with educational choice."

But opponents disagree that the measure will involve parents more. "Parental involvement is a myth," Marshall said.

"Educational choice is only a way to criticize public schools without coming up with a real solution."

"The problems are not the school problems," he added, citing an increase in single-parent households and more children without parental supervision. "It is society's problem."

"Schools should not be held accountable for the ills of society, nor can schools cure the ills of society overnight," Marshall said.

VOTE '90

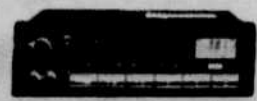
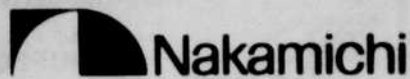
Measure 11

Question: Should constitutional provide choice of public schools, tax credit for education outside public schools, voter approval of certain education laws?

SUMMARY

- Amends Oregon Constitution. Requires open enrollment plan allowing students to attend public schools outside their districts, with legislative standards for financing, and acceptance and rejection of applications.
- Provides state income tax credit for expenses of educating students outside public schools. Credit equally available for secular, religious, institutional, home basic education.
- Establishes Educational Choice Fund, funded by school districts and state, which may cover costs of tax credit, impact aid to districts, tax relief.
- Requires voter approval of new, more restrictive laws on nongovernment basic education.

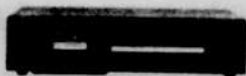
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