

Students go to Salem to survey state legislators

By Joe Kidd
Emerald Politics Editor

With a flock of University programs headed toward the endangered species list, how will Oregon's legislators respond to the budget-slashing results of Ballot Measure 5?

Do they want new taxes to fill in the budget chasm created by the tax-limiting measure? If so, how soon?

Ten University students set out Tuesday to find answers to those questions and more with an ASUO-sponsored survey of 38 members of the state House and Senate.

With Measure 5's budget shears heading for all state-funded agencies — including many University programs and services — the poll results pointed up two important conclusions:

- Proposed University program cuts and tuition increases will probably arrive in July as planned; a tax replacement won't be sought in time to stave off the initial pains of budget reductions.
- Those budget woes may find some relief by the fall of 1992, if legislators' hopes of finding a new money source are eventually realized.

University Sens. Laura DeLeone and Kimberly Heiney spearheaded the effort, originally hoping to find support for a University Senate motion to suspend proposed cuts until other money is found.

"We wanted to get a feel for what is going on up there (in the Legislature)," DeLeone said, "if (legislators) are going to look for replacement revenues in time to help the University and other state-funded institutions."

The pollsters found some encouragement for Oregon's colleges and universities. Most legislative respondents favored finding a new tax after

the first of Measure 5's six budget-squashing years.

Nevertheless, the students' plan for a University Senate motion to temporarily stave off the proposed \$13 million in University cuts fell through.

In the face of a long bureaucratic process, the motion wouldn't fly before the Saturday deadline — when colleges and universities must submit their austerity plans to the State System of Higher Education, DeLeone said.

"Now I don't know if it could stop the cuts," she said. "Now it's pretty late. But it looks like there will be a replacement revenue by November 1992, and that will save us from further damage in the future."

Measure 5, passed in the November elections, sets a 1.5 percent lid on property taxes, requiring the state to shift an additional \$633 million in 1991-93 to secondary school funding.

Proposed budget reductions in response to Measure 5 have trickled down to all state-funded agencies, with higher education having to slice \$74 million from its two-year budget.

Measure 5 begins with the next fiscal year, starting on July 1. University cuts would simultaneously kick in, "then they'll start weeding out the programs slowly," DeLeone said.

Because Measure 5 has a six-year lifespan, which will take increasingly larger chunks out of state coffers, most legislators expect to find another source of funding. The poll results point to a sales tax as the most popular.

According to the poll both Republicans and Democrats place a high priority on developing a new tax. But among those respondents, Republicans leaned more heavily toward a sales tax, rather than an increase in income taxes or some form of corporate tax.

Portland light rail gets approval

SALEM (AP) — The Oregon Senate unanimously passed a bill Thursday to speed expanded light rail service to the Portland area. But the measure may be on a collision course with the House.

Rep. Fred Parkinson, R-Silverton, chairman of the House Environment & Energy Committee, has persuaded a majority of the panel to add language to the House light rail bill that would approve siting of a church in rural Marion County. County commissioners have

refused to permit that project. House Democrats vow to oppose the light rail bill unless the church provision is removed.

Further complicating the situation is the federal government, which has offered to pay 75 percent of the cost of the \$910 million project to extend light rail lines west of Portland.

The offer is jeopardized if the bill isn't passed by March 1.

The Tri-Met transit system must have final approvals by

Sept. 30 to get that level of federal help. To make the deadline, the bill would speed up processes for appealing the project's location.

Sen. Jeanette Hamby, R-Hillsboro, floor manager for SB573, said the measure doesn't sidestep normal land use requirements but only accelerates the appeals stage.

"This is not a super-siting bill," she said. "These are all the same hoops that have always been there."

Measure 5 Legislator Poll

The following are selected questions from a survey of 38 members of the state Senate and House. The responses were submitted anonymously by the legislators; the ASUO-sponsored poll was conducted Tuesday at the Capitol by 10 University students.

Abbreviations: R-Republican; D-Democrat.

Respondents:

- 5 Senate Republicans; 11 House Republicans; 11 Senate Democrats; 11 House Democrats (R-16, D-22)
- 11 Women; 27 Men

Note: There are a total of 30 members in the Democratic-controlled Senate and 60 members in the Republican-controlled House.

• Do you favor or oppose instituting a replacement revenue solution to compensate for the recent reduction in property taxes? All but 1 Republican favored a replacement revenue.

• How important is it to find additional sources of revenue to prevent the cuts resulting from Ballot Measure 5? (On a scale from five to zero; extremely important — five, not important at all — zero.)

Five — 25 (R-8, D-16)

Four — 5 (R-1, D-4)

Three — 4 (R-2, D-1)

Two — 0

One — 0

Zero — 2 (R-1, D-1)

• Which type(s) of revenue replacement do you favor?

Sales tax — 22 (R-12, D-15)

Personal income tax — 11 (R-1, D-10)

Corporate income tax — 9 (R-2, D-7)

Gross receipts tax — 6 (R-1, D-5)

12 other respondents were divided among 4 other forms of taxes.

• Given the fact that \$633 million is being lost in the first year because of the reductions in Oregon's property taxes, what is the size of replacement revenue you are aiming for?

The most common response was in the \$600-800 million range; responses ranged from no new taxes to \$2 billion during 1991-93.

• Realistically, when should a replacement revenue take effect?

Sooner than May 1991 — 4 (R-0, D-4)

May 1991 — 1 (R-0, D-1)

June 1991 — 2 (R-0, D-2)

November 1991 — 5 (R-1, D-4)

November 1992 — 11 (R-6, D-5)

Sooner than November 1992 — 10 (R-4, D-5)

• How would you prefer to see a replacement revenue solution enacted?

Legislative action with referral to citizens — 25 (R-8, D-17)

Solely through legislative action — 7 (R-1, D-5)

Solely through citizen action — 2 (R-2, D-0)

• Do you think it is wise for the Legislature to preview a citizen revenue initiative?

Yes, preview — 19 (R-8, D-11)

No — 13 (R-5, D-8)

• Do you feel that Oregon already places too much burden on its personal state income tax?

No — 15 (R-2, D-12)

Yes — 14 (R-6, D-8)

• Do you favor the Legislature adopting a temporary surcharge on personal income tax to buy time for a long-term solution?

No — 12 (R-3, D-9)

Yes — 8 (R-1, D-7)

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