

## Make term limitation nationwide, not local

When Washington voters decide whether to limit the terms of their state and national government, they'd better make sure all their bases are covered.

The limitation measure coming before the voters in November would cut the number of terms congressional as well as state legislative members could serve.

California, Colorado and Oklahoma passed term-limiting legislation last year, and supporters are now pushing for statewide referendums in most of the western United States.

It comes as no surprise that the primary funders of this movement are Republicans and that they are targeting the western region. Fed up with lawmakers who can't seem to hold their weight against the "special-interest" groups of the area, they want to see a change.

However, allowing this measure to pass would mean a loss of state power at the national level.



Tom Foley

The idea has potential. Term limitations would ideally put government back into the hands of its citizens by forcing career politicians out of office, making room for fresh faces.

The only way it could work is if the entire nation agreed on such a plan. Should Washington or any other state limit the terms of its congressional and senate delegation, it would undermine that state's ability to effectively represent itself.

To get anything done through the Capitol's political power structure, members of Congress need seniority. This status buys committee appointments, "friends" with whom one can trade the passage of state-relevant measures, and your basic skinny on who is who and how things work.

Unless everyone at the national level was on the same term-limitation time schedule, the new kids on the block would be at the mercy of the veteran legislators.

Washington can't afford that. The Northwest can't afford it. Controversy the region is currently experiencing, specifically the spotted owl-timber workers strife, wouldn't have a chance of being resolved in a way consistent with area concerns without potent Northwestern representation.

Approval of the measure would dilute this necessary power. Should it pass, the state's congressional delegation would have to leave office in 1994 if they met or surpassed the new limits. This stipulation would force House Speaker Thomas Foley to abandon his post, a loss of political might Washington cannot afford.

The state should think twice before handing over its bargaining control; state and regional interests should be protected by retaining the necessary influence in D.C.'s power puzzle.

### COMMENTARY POLICY

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* welcomes commentaries from the public concerning topics of interest to the University community.

Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible and signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified upon submission. The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length if necessary.



### OPINION

## Solution is one voters don't want to hear



### THE FINE PRINT

BY DON PETERS

This state needs a sales tax. There, I've said it. And wonder of wonders, the sky didn't fall in, the ground didn't quake, and I wasn't stoned to death by an angry mob.

At least not yet. Mention the words "sales tax" anywhere in Oregon and voters immediately find 67 different reasons not to have one. If a politician were to even suggest implementing a sales tax, you can be sure it would be the political equivalent of lobbing themselves off the top of PLC.

OK, so maybe I exaggerate, but just a little.

Despite all the possible benefits, and all the arguments made in favor of a sales tax, Oregon voters refuse to even consider the possibility.

Sure there are some benefits to living in a state without a sales tax. Because I am still an official California resident, I don't file an Oregon income tax return. And when I get my Whopper and fries, \$3.99 means \$3.99, so by all means refrain from instituting a sales tax.

But if Oregon voters want to solve the fiscal problems of this state, a sales tax is the best answer.

The idea behind Measure 5 was a good one, but it didn't go far enough. Yes, something needed to be done to slash the property tax rates. Asking homeowners to pay huge

amounts in property tax to finance the state public education system was unfair. So in that respect, Measure 5 did what it set out to do.

But in taking schools off the property tax system, and not coming up with any replacement revenue, Measure 5 put Oregon in its present financial position, which can best be described as precarious. The state has to come up with money to fund the school system. Pretty soon, the state's reserves will be used up, and there won't be any more money to fund the system. Then the schools close. End of story.

Using Measure 5 to change the tax system was kind of like using a flamethrower to light a cigarette — it works, but you tend to burn a lot more than you intended to.

It was a short-term solution with bitter ramifications for the future. The Oregon voting population seems to want it both ways: social programs without any way to fund them. Measure 5 decimated this state. Some of the stop-gap solutions politicians have come up with are good ones — trimming the state bureaucracy, cutting out unneeded and bloated programs, etc. — but they do nothing to solve the problem permanently.

With a 5 percent sales tax, things will be much better. By 1995, Measure 5 will cost this state \$2.9 billion in replacement revenue, or about 40 percent of the current budget. While the politicians skip around the issues, offering confusing, half-baked solutions, no one is looking at what needs to be done to permanently solve the problem.

The whole point behind Measure 5 seemed to be "let's get those lousy so-and-sos up in Salem to get off their butts and do something." A noble idea, but slashing property taxes without replacing the lost funds is short-sightedness at its worst.

With the threat of school closures, public outcry has finally reached the governor's office in Salem. Gov. Barbara Roberts' whistle-stop tour of the state was an interesting idea. It was a rebirth of old-time politics, actually going out to the voters to get their opinions on an issue. But Roberts — at least for the moment — seems to have dropped the idea of the sales tax. Where is the replacement revenue going to come from? Either Roberts is expecting to win the lottery, or there is a money tree outside the Capitol building she hasn't told us about yet.

People who voted in favor of Measure 5 argue that it will force lawmakers to come up with solutions. For years, these people have asked for property tax reform, only to have their requests ignored. Now those same voters are demanding immediate action from a notoriously slow Salem process. To me, that shows an extraordinary (and unwarranted) faith in the Oregon legislature.

Both sides — politicians and voters — must accept equal blame for the Measure 5 debacle; but you can be sure that when the schools start closing and the financial situation worsens, the fingers will be pointed anywhere but at themselves.

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