

## REFORM

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Another trend that has grown during the Measure 5 crisis is the change in the organization of agency administrations. Many legislators came to the session having read the new book *Reinventing Government*. Although the new book offers no set formula for success, it encourages more empowerment of workers and an orientation to long-term outcomes rather than a short-term view.

These new tools and approaches are catching on and are helping take some of the guesswork and politics out of the Legislature's process for funding programs. Using these new techniques, legislators and administrators can find creative ways to save money.

In higher education, for example, students should be prepared for two major new ideas. The first is a change to a more need-based tuition formula. If you have the money, you'll be paying more. The second is the new system of high tuition penalties if you keep taking classes beyond your graduation requirements. With exceptions for multiple majors, this might be acceptable to students as well. These strategies could save millions without causing too much detriment to the quality of education.

But Measure 5 created a political situation, not just a philosophical debate. Because of the money crunch, and the politics, many sound plans are being tossed out because they don't fit into the priorities of the politicians involved.

Most everyone recognizes that college educations are the keys to 21st century employment and college-educated citizens require less social services later in life, but because of the priorities of the politicians in Salem, higher education will be taking one of the biggest hits of any state program.

The budget process for next year isn't over yet, and it isn't clear exactly how everything will turn out.

Legislators might prefer to take the easy way out and merely shift costs rather than cut costs. They could do this by charging higher user fees, or even privatizing agencies to remove the costs from the state's budget.

The budgets do have to be trimmed, but the trick is to find efficient ways to streamline, so that the same quality and quantity of service is created for a cheaper price. Otherwise the service that people use does not become any cheaper, we just end up paying the bill at some other place or time.

Simply downsizing government is not guaranteed to benefit the economy. Unfortunately, these kinds of shortcuts will invariably be taken.

State government will farm out more responsibilities to the county and city levels. Some services, like drug and alcohol treatment, will be privatized. Fees will probably increase for things like park access and licenses. Services will be less available for thousands, but for right now there are no good alternatives.

At the Legislature there is bipartisan agreement that some form of tax reform should be referred out for voter approval. Speaker Larry Campbell has warned of the "massive hemorrhaging" if Measure 5 is allowed to take full effect without tax reform.

By 1995 the shortfall is projected to be \$2.8 billion dollars. That's enough money to fund 45 Universities of Oregon. A 6 percent sales tax on most goods and services is projected to bring in just \$2.2 billion.

The key questions over tax reform will be twofold: How much new taxes as opposed to how much spending cuts, and where will those new taxes come from? High-powered lobbyists are already peddling their personal versions of what fairness is to them.

But students can make their voices heard. There are two keys: education and involvement. But you don't have to be a political junkie to make your vote count.

Students have a lobbying group, the Oregon Student Lobby. The group works full time at the Capitol testifying, watching the legislators and tracking the important bills. The ASUO also has its own political affairs coordinator, Philip Bentley.

Right now, things are moving very quickly at the Legislature, and most representatives have long staked out their bargaining

positions. Calling them up to complain now will not change their minds.

However, bothering them might be just what you have in mind. If you are the abrasive/cantankerous sort, you might enjoy pestering certain people's offices. You can reach the Capitol switchboard at 1-800-327-7389, and they'll put you through. This can be fairly effective at slowing down an office. This is a hardball game, after all.

A more civilized form of participation is to involve yourself in a campaign. When tax reform gets to the ballot there will be a hard-fought campaign against it. Donating your time or money to the Heart of Oregon Coalition, based in Salem, would be one of the most direct ways to support tax reform.

The most overlooked form of activism is educating yourself and talking with your friends and family about what concerns you. Political support is a fragile

thing, and oftentimes if you're politically active you can make the difference in someone else's voting.

You do have to work hard to win votes, but never be rude. If you can't easily calm their concerns, be patient. Ask someone else for an insight, but get back to the person. Remember, never get frustrated. If you've let yourself get into a shouting match, you need to take a nap, or find someone else to talk with.

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