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Group gives voice to higher ed

By Julie Swensen
Oregon Daily Emerald

At a time of increasing concern about budget cuts dealt to Oregon colleges and universities, higher education supporters have formed a political action committee to help them further their cause across the state.

The committee, named the "Campaign for Oregon's Future," comprises students, faculty, alumni, parents and other supporters with a mission to bring tax reform to Oregon and to advocate higher education, said Randy McDonald, director of the committee.

"What we saw was a lack of voice for higher education," said John Goodman, the committee's campaign administrator, on why the committee was formed. "This is a way to give those peo-

ple a means to a voice."

Funded by private donations, the committee helps to recruit higher education boosters, such as parents of college graduates and alumni, to work on local pro-Ballot Measure 1 campaigns, McDonald said.

Since the committee's establishment in August of this year, its volunteers have urged voters to support Measure 1 — which would enact a 5 percent sales tax with the revenue devoted to kindergarten through 12th grade schools and community colleges — through the mail and by phone.

The future of the University and school system statewide is at least in part dependent on the outcome of this election, Goodman said.

"The damage that will be done to schools if this measure

doesn't pass will be irreparable," he said.

Since Ballot Measure 5 — a property tax limitation proposal — was approved by voters in 1990, more than \$48 million in budgeted state funds at the University has been cut, including more than 300 faculty and staff positions, 200 classes and 24 degree-granting programs, according to the University of Oregon Alumni Association.

Whether Measure 1 passes or fails, the committee will continue advocating tax reform, a need that has been talked about for some time, McDonald said.

"It's important for the University and students that we not give up until we solve the Measure 5 situation," he said.

For more information, contact the Campaign for Oregon's Future at 344-5049.

SALES TAX

Continued from Page 1

tries like mining, will only have a 3 percent tax applied to it, but machinery used to restore the land after mining will be taxed at 5 percent, the regular rate.

"We're encouraging environmental degradation and discouraging reclamation by the tax structure," Cardoza said.

On the other hand, for Associated Oregon Industries, a statewide business lobbying organization, even a 2 percent reduction in the tax rate for some machinery wasn't enough.

Gary Carlson, the organization's vice president, said the manufacturing community was seeking "outright exemption" from the tax on merchandise and equipment used in manufacturing.

Associated Oregon Industries, which includes manufacturers, retailers and others working in business, had submitted a tax proposal to the Legislature after more than a year of work.

The Legislature altered the plan to the point that AOI believed it could no longer support the tax, Cardoza said.

The tax's inefficiency stems from the fact that it costs more money to administer per dollar collected in tax than any other tax, he said.

Cardoza said people who own small businesses or produce goods in their own homes will be forced to start filling out paperwork, and for them, this tax will be like a "driver's license to be able to vend. It makes vending a privilege and not a right."

Because some businesses will have to fill out tax returns on a monthly basis, Cardoza said the proposed tax is invasive.

Carlson said his organization also believes retailers should be compensated for having to serve as the state's tax collectors. Under the proposed plan, retailers would be compensated by being allowed to keep a percentage of the sales tax they collect.

In 1995, the Legislature would decide whether further compensation to retailers is necessary and if so, how much the compensation should be.

Both Cardoza and Carlson believe the Legislature did not make enough of an effort to increase government efficiency before turning to a sales tax.

"They didn't fund education and then came to us holding school children as hostages to ask for a sales tax," Cardoza said. "They could have shifted other monies around and they didn't."

Despite their anti-tax stance, Carlson and Cardoza said they are not against education.

"Opponents are saying if you oppose the sales tax, you oppose schools," Cardoza said. "We need to perpetuate some type of (education) system, and if the schools need more money, we'll work on a campaign."

Carlson said many people interpret his organization's stance as being one where the group "turned our back on education."

"We've probably done more for education than any other group in the state," he said.

The organization's support of education includes a study done on education reform, an awards program to celebrate excellence in teaching and administering, and production of a video that showcases ideas on administration from principals across the country, Carlson said.

Cardoza is skeptical of the sales tax's chances of passing.

"Traditionally, we have an anti-sales tax history here in the state," he said, adding that he believed the percentage of voters in favor would increase.

The increase, he said, will probably be because of a change in demographics, including an increase in the number of voters from California and Washington, who he said might be more accustomed to the idea of a sales tax.

Should the sales tax fail, Cardoza said, the tax he most supports would be a gross receipts tax on large corporations, which would be like a sales tax, except only on businesses that do more than \$400,000 in business each year.

"We want to get the money from where the money is," Cardoza said. "Big corporations are backing the sales tax because they know where we're coming next. It's not property owners."

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