

EDITORIAL

Here's what we think; now you choose: Vote

The following is a summary of recommendations the *Emerald* has made to voters throughout October and November for today's general election. While not all ballot measures and races are covered, those issues with the greatest potential for harm to the state and higher education received in-depth appraisals.

Measure 5: Would amend the constitution to require voter approval of most new or increased taxes or fees. **NO.**

Measure 8: Would amend the constitution to require public employees to pay 6 percent of their gross salary toward pensions. This measure is particularly punitive and ignores collective bargaining agreements reached in good faith between public employees and their employers. **NO.**

Measure 10: Amends the constitution to require a two-thirds vote of both houses of the Legislature to change voter-approved prison sentences. **NO.**

Measure 11: Sets mandatory minimum prison sentences for 16 felonies. This measure also requires that a person between the ages of 15 to 17, when charged with one of the listed crimes, be tried as an adult. This measure, while well-meaning, is unfunded and would require a substantial shift in state resources to pay for added corrections costs. It also takes discretion out of the hands of judges who can rule on the merits of each case, especially in the case of juveniles. **NO.**

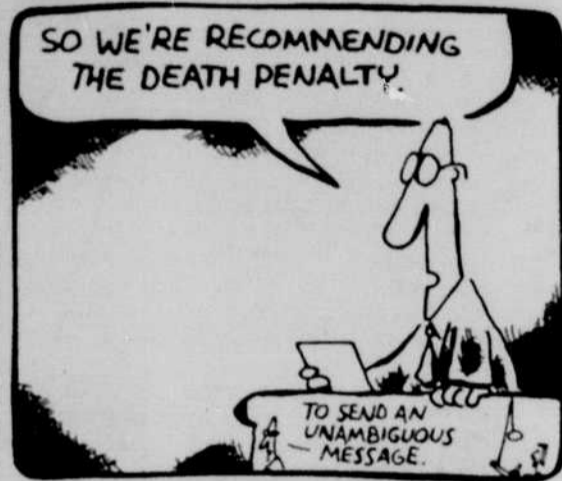
Measure 13: Would amend the constitution and prohibit state or local governments from protecting homosexuals against discrimination. This is another particularly loathsome measure that would allow open discrimination against homosexuals in housing, jobs and basic civil rights. **NO.**

Measure 15: Would amend the constitution to require that the Legislature maintain current funding for schools and community colleges. This measure seeks to do the job of a dysfunctional Legislature incapable of compromise when it comes to funding schools. It is the result of the steady erosion in school funding since the passage of the property tax limitation in 1990. Ballot Measure 15 would fund schools at the expense of every other state-funded program, most notably higher education. Tuition would increase at all state colleges and universities if the measure passes. **NO.**

Measure 16: Would allow terminally ill adults to obtain a lethal prescription of drugs to commit suicide. This measure does not present enough adequate safeguards or oversight by the state to prevent abuse. **NO.**

Measure 19: Amends the constitution to permit state and local governments to pass laws banning obscenity. This measure would allow city and county governments to create their own meaning of censorship and is overly narrow. **NO.**

With all the measures on the November 8 ballot, people who have not had the time for in-depth study should not feel obligated to vote yes or no out of a sense of duty. Many ballot measures seek to amend the constitution and will greatly affect the future of Oregon. For those who feel uninformed, confused or who just don't have an opinion either way, abstaining from individual ballot measures or races would be thoughtful and prudent.



■ OPINION

Measure 16 part of frontier spirit



PRIMO A. J. FONTANA

Americans supposedly pride themselves on the pioneer spirit, that of the rugged individual about whom we hear so much during Republican campaign speeches. But, the dirty little secret of our country is that underneath the rugged outside, we are wishy-washy sentimentalists at heart.

This is perhaps most apparent when looking at the campaign (which has been quite successful) against Ballot Measure 16.

Those who oppose the measure have used every tear-jerking argument possible: that the weak and elderly will be forced to die, doctors will be playing God by deciding who shall or shall not live, et cetera.

To be quite honest, it has all been rather silly.

The few who have actually read and digested the measure have seen that it is thorough, straightforward and rigidly structured in order to assure that the nightmare scenarios presented by 16's opposition do not occur. Presumably (at least hopefully), you readers understand the system of checks and double checks which will be implemented, as well as the heavy punishments which will be placed upon those who do not strictly follow the measure's guidelines.

But many will not, since this is politics and Americans are sentimentalists. The opposition knows this, and they have already outspent supporters of the measure 10 to 1, according to a column by *The Boston Globe's* Ellen Goodman. They have pushed their gut-wrenching arguments to the hilt, and more importantly, they have

grossly simplified the issues in order to assure that the measure is struck down.

What they don't want you to see is that this measure is about something more than death with dignity, it is about self-determination for the citizens of this state, and hopefully, this country. Ballot Measure 16's opponents place all of us under the moral constraints of a select group of people. Aside from this being against what the builders of the nation intended when framing the Constitution, it is simply wrong.

If you do not harm another person in the process, you should not be subject to the ideology of another person or party. This seems a very simple idea, and one fundamental to our beliefs as Americans. However, the anti-16 forces don't agree.

They use simplistic and abstract arguments; saying that life is too precious, or that you can't give up just because you are ill, or some other hogwash along those lines. But these are all just ways to say one thing: you cannot control your own destiny.

Speaking for myself, if a terminal illness depleted my life to the point where it was no longer worth living, I would not want to continue. I want to be remembered as a living, vital human being, not as a shadow of my former self wasted away by disease.

It should not matter that 16 would not force me to notify my family. Such a decision should be in the hands of the patient, and if one is truly close to his or her relatives, that person may or may not choose to discuss the decision with family. The government, as conservatives tell us so often, cannot be used to strengthen a family.

If people do not believe in physician-assisted suicide, they should have the respect to allow those who do, to live under their own moral and/or spiritual guidelines. As with abortion, if you don't believe in it, simply

don't have one.

It is ironic that Republicans, with all of their empty talk about the rights of the individual, have been so quiet. When it comes to gun control or environmental concerns, they hate government, and any attempt at regulation is met with virulent opposition. But when it comes to enforcing Judeo-Christian ethics, no amount of federal, state, county or city intervention is enough.

To be fair, few prominent Democrats have supported, or even mentioned Ballot Measure 16. Seeing the political tide shifting, most have shied away from it in order to keep moderates happy. It is sad that the party which is supposed to be progressive could not look past a few votes, and toward the larger issues surrounding this measure. It could have helped define a currently undefined party, but the opportunity has been wasted.

The state of Oregon and its people have a chance to do something of paramount importance. This measure could prove to be a crucial juncture in the history of not only our fair state, but the nation as well. We the people should be guaranteed the freedom to control our own destinies, to shape our personal beliefs without the interference of the government and to fight the big money in this campaign.

Even if you know that you will not wish to terminate your own life at any time, or your own personal morals do not allow you to believe that it is proper to do so, you should still vote yes on the measure.

Don't be a "Gumped" sentimentalist as the no on 16 forces want you to be. Prove that you truly have that pioneer spirit. A yes vote will break new ground in allowing all of us not only the dignity which we deserve, but the right to define ourselves as individuals.

Primo A. J. Fontana is a columnist for the Emerald.

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