

POLITICS

a voter's guide to the 1996 election and life on the campaign trail

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ISSUE: GAY DISCRIMINATION ON THE ISSUES

Question: Would you endorse federal legislation making it illegal to fire or avoid hiring people because they are homosexual?



"I do not believe that it is right for employers to discriminate based on sexual orientation. Men and women in 41 states may now be fired from their jobs solely based on their sexual orientation, even though it has no bearing on their job

performance. Those who face this kind of job discrimination have no legal recourse.... The Employment Non-Discrimination Act, for which I announced my support last fall, is designed to protect the rights of all Americans to participate in the job market without fear of unfair discrimination, while providing exceptions for religious organizations."

—President Bill Clinton, Democratic candidate



"I oppose discrimination in any form. I do not, however, favor creating special rights for any one group. I believe that people should be hired based on their talents, knowledge and experience — not based on their race, religion, lifestyle or disability."

—Bob Dole, Republican candidate



"Every time we pass a law we give up a portion of our freedom. The American people must learn to work together and respect one another. No law will make us do this."

—Ross Perot, Reform Party candidate

—Associated Press

Opponent attacks Measure 47

By Shana Cohn
Politics Editor

Lora Cuykendall, an opponent of Measure 47, recently discussed the state's future pertaining to education if the measure passed. She also answered questions about Measure 5, the property tax limitation that has decreased state spending per student since its passage in 1990. Cuykendall is part of Oregonians For Local Control, the campaign committee for No on 47.

Thursday, the Emerald will feature an interview with Bill Sizemore whose group, Oregon Taxpayers United, sponsored Measure 47.

LORA CUYKENDALL

QUESTION & ANSWER

funding of schools, but it was less than half. Local communities could pass tax bases or levy taxes to fund school districts. Measure 5 took away the option of increased financial support from local communities. It put a rate limit on how much local tax rate could go to schools and required the state to make up the difference.

[Bill] Sizemore will tell you that schools have dealt with Measure 5 just fine. The total amount of money spent on schools since 1990 is higher now, but the number of students has also grown. The state didn't deal with it just fine. Per student spending went down.

ISSUE: Schools

Q. How would Measure 47 affect K-12 and community colleges?

A. Measure 47 would be very damaging to local schools. Not only does it cut money available to local schools, but it continues the loss of local control. Measure 5 and Measure 47 take away the right of local communities to decide how much they want to spend on schools.

ISSUE: Money Replacement

Q. Could the money lost from Measure 47 be replaced from other sources?

A. The measure allows money to be replaced only from state income tax. The Legislative Revenue Office estimates there will be \$1 billion lost to cities, counties and school districts in the [1997-99] biennium. Even with the anticipated growth in income tax revenues, that growth wouldn't equal \$1 billion. The state also need to maintain other programs such as the Oregon Health Plan and prison expansions.

ISSUE: Before Measure 5

Q. What was school funding like previous to Measure 5?

A. Measure 5 switched the control of school funding from the local community to the state. Before the measure, there was some state

ISSUE: Funding Higher Education

The state's colleges and universities do not get money from property taxes, but do get it from the general fund.

Q. Why is higher education worried about losses?

A. There will be tremendous pressure on state general fund money to make up losses in local schools and city and county programs such as public safety. For the state to make up the losses, it will leave less money available for other state funding. If most of the [state's] money goes to public safety, other services will be cut, like library and senior programs.

ISSUE: Tuition

Q. How would the measure affect tuition at state colleges, universities and community colleges?

A. It would continue to go up. It would be difficult for the state to deal with this measure without raising tuition again. The measure would take away community colleges' traditional source

of funding and cut down on the options of replacing the money. Let's say Lane Community College has a budget cut [under Measure 47], and they want to make up the budget with higher tuition. They would be required to go to a vote to pass an increase. [Measure 47 prohibits using increased fees or other charges to pay for government services and products previously funded by property tax revenues, unless a new or increased fee has been approved by voters].

ISSUE: Measure 5 vs. Measure 47

Q. Will Measure 47 affect schools differently than Measure 5?

A. Measure 5 was a rate limitation. It limited the tax rate to \$5 per \$1000 of assessed property. So if the value of people's homes or businesses increased, it brought in some additional money. Measure 47 is a tax limit. It limits how much property taxes could go up, even if a house is assessed at more. Each individual property bill can't increase more than 3 percent each year. With Measure 47, you end up losing some money that local communities could have collected for schools under Measure 5. And unlike Measure 5, it doesn't require the state to make up the lost property tax money.

ISSUE: Taxes

Oregon Taxpayers' United say Measure 47 could be enacted without any cuts to schools and other essential services such as police and fire protection. It says the reduced property tax revenues could be replaced from the state's abundance of state income and lottery dollars.

Q. Is this possible?

A. It's true that state income and taxes collected have gone up. The economy is good. Lottery money has increased [the first half of the 1990s] because of a huge expansion in video poker. It's unlikely the lottery will expand like that again and could even go down because of competition from Indian gaming casinos. It would take an increase in the state income tax rate to raise enough money to make up for a billion dollars

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ON THE BALLOT

A look at some of the 23 ballot measures in the November 5 election

THE MEASURE

47

WHAT IT WOULD DO

Amends the state constitution to limit the amount of property taxes that can be collected. Otherwise known as "cut and cap," Measure 47 proposes to roll back property taxes to their 1994-95 level, or alternately, cut them to 10 percent less than the 1995-1996 tax, whichever is smaller. Once set at this base level, future growth in taxes, for tax years following 1997-98, is limited to no more than a 3 percent increase per year, with exceptions. Would limit revenue available for schools and other local services funded by property taxes. Local governments' lost revenue may be replaced only with state income tax, unless voters approve replacement fees or charges. Revenue reductions from the tax limitation must be allocated in a way that public safety and public education are priority. Requires tax measures to be approved at general elections or elections with 50 percent turnout. Requires that property be assessed at real market value, a requirement already in place since 1968. Would restrict general obligation bonds. Tax levy approvals in certain elections would require 50 percent voter participation.

ARGUMENTS FOR

Without Measure 47, property taxes will skyrocket next year and every year thereafter, which will hurt taxpayers and retired people on fixed incomes. The measure will cut property taxes by 10 percent and limit future growth. If the state continues to make up reduced property tax revenue with income tax and lottery money, Measure 47 can be implemented without any cuts to schools or local governments. If the measure doesn't pass, the state's excess of revenue will be spent to expand bureaucracy. The measure would stop the shift of the property tax burden from residential to commercial property. Since the legislature hasn't passed any bills to limit the growth of the property tax, it was necessary to put the measure on the ballot by initiative to protect taxpayers.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

The Legislative Revenue Office estimates that if Measure 47 passes, local governments and schools together will lose an estimated \$467 million in revenue statewide in 1997-98, and \$533 million in 1998-99, and increasing amounts the following years. The measure doesn't provide any means of replacing those losses. It further erodes local control, especially for schools, over even minor decisions. The measure eliminates the ability of communities to choose what level of services they want and turns these decisions over to the legislature. If the state were to replace the revenue lost to local governments by the measure, it would mean severe cuts in other state programs. It removes the historical connection between the property tax paid and the assessed value of the property.

Sources: League of Women Voters, Oregon Taxpayers United and Oregon State System of Higher Education