

Lack of the double majority increases money measures

Some governments are not waiting for the November's ballot to pursue ballot money

SALEM—Freed from the "double majority" rule for the first time since 1996, local governments are loading the November ballot with money measures for everything from jails to schools to light rail.

More than 120 money measures seeking more than \$2 billion will appear on Nov. 3 ballots across Oregon.

Thursday was the deadline for local governments to file tax measures with county elections officials.

Measure 47, approved in 1996, required money measures to be approved by a "double majority"—a majority of votes plus at least a 50 percent voter turnout—to be valid. The only exception is during the general election in even-numbered years.

It was replaced by Measure 50, which retained the double-majority provision, last year.

In May, voters approved 39 of 62 measures but only nine achieved the double majority. At least 20 local governments that passed measures but failed to get the 50 percent turnout are rattling their tin cups at voters again.

Wish lists for November include at least 25 school bond measures and 47 public safety tax requests.

From 1990 to 1997, local government debt in Oregon rose from \$4.4 billion to \$8.4 billion, when the state's population grew by 13.2 percent to 3.2 million.

Not all the governments who failed in May are waiting until November.

Deschutes County, for example, has a \$41 million sheriff's operating levy on the Sept. 15 ballot.

Measure 50 included modest property tax cuts for many Oregonians and enacted other limits on how fast taxes can increase. But it also provided exceptions.

Bond measures are exempt from the limits. And operating tax rates are frozen, but the governments can ask voters for temporary levies for as long as five years. At least 46 governments are doing so in November. The largest request is a \$79.7 million levy to move nuclear fuel from pools near the Columbia River at Hanford nuclear reservation.

The K Basins cleanup project, which would transfer 2,300 tons of corroding fuel to a dry storage vault near the center of the 560-square-mile reservation, is considered a top priority at Hanford.

"We understand the urgency of getting this squared away as quickly as possible," Erik Olds, a spokesman for the Energy Department here, said Friday.

The K Basins project is not covered under the Tri-Party agreement—the legal pact that is supposed to hold DOE to cleanup standards and timetables. The state Department of Ecology and the EPA are negotiating with the Energy Department to add the K Basins to the agreement.

The talks moved into dispute resolution with a mediator because no one trusts the frequently changing cost and time estimates enough to commit to a legally binding contract.

Friday was supposed to be the deadline for the Energy Department and EPA representatives to complete the talks. Olds said he didn't know if the deadline would

be met but progress was being made, and he expected some action soon.

Earlier this summer, the government approved a one-year contract extension to DE&S Hanford, the contractor overseeing the K Basins project.

Estimated costs have risen from \$740 million in 1995 to \$1.4 billion and possibly more in 1998. Meanwhile, the expected completion date has slipped from 2001 to 2005. The current target date for the start of fuel removal is November 2000.

The contract extension for DE&S Hanford, a subsidiary of nuclear construction giant Duke Engineering of Charlotte, N.C., contains goals which the company must meet to be considered for future extensions.

Fluor Daniel Hanford Co., the main Hanford contractor, and DE&S Hanford have overhauled project management in recent months.

DOE and EPA want to push the cost estimates down and possibly make the completion date earlier.

But Doug Sherwood, EPA's Hanford site manager, is skeptical about the ability to obtain accurate estimates any time soon.

"I think we still have a ways to go," he said last week. "The costs are not well defined. We have a big fear they will rob (programs) with lower priorities to feed the spent fuel project."

Hanford's modern-day mission is cleanup of the accumulated radioactive and hazardous waste from four decades of plutonium production for the nation's nuclear arsenal.

All Ways Travel

- Student Air Tickets
- Cruises
- Eurail (issued instantly)
- Amtrak
- Contiki Tours
- Great Customer Service
- US Bus
- Much, Much More!!!

E-mail: awt@luv2travel.com (Reply in 24hrs or less Mon. - Fri.)

Serving U of O
Students since 1990!
No Service/Ticket Fees!

1200 High St.
338-4199
Student Travel Experts



CAMPUS SHOE SHOP

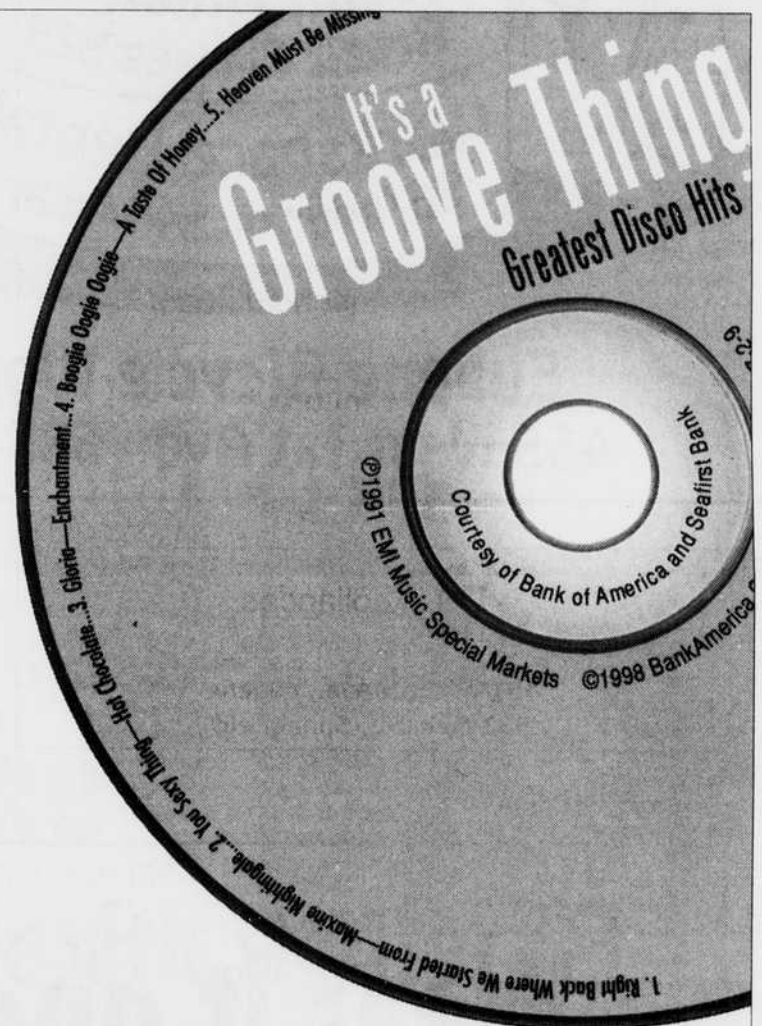


Wig Wam Socks
Acorn Slippers
Spenco Products
Wood Clogs
Birkenstock Repair

Jerry Martin

843 E. 13th
Eugene, OR 97401
Phone: 541-343-6613

It's your first big decision of the school year. Did you think it would involve disco?



Open a checking account at Bank of America, and you'll get a **free Disco CD** and carrying case.* You'll also get a free order of checks, a VERSATEL® Check Card with your photo, and a **free \$30 AirTouch™ Prepaid Cellular Card.**

*All of this, just for opening a VERSATEL checking account at Bank of America. Think of it as a really good way to groove into the school year.

Stop by your nearest branch today.

- Eugene Branch, 201 East 11th Ave, Eugene, (541) 342-5810;
- Bailey Hill Safeway Branch, 945 Bailey Hill Road, Eugene, (541) 342-5830;
- Delta Oaks Price Chopper Branch, 1060 Green Acres Road, Eugene, (541) 342-5823

put your life in motion

Bank of America

*Offer available through October 30, 1998, while supplies last. See branch for complete details and rules of account. Bank of America. Member FDIC.

