

Voters OK budget bills

Measures 19 and 20 pass by a nearly two-to-one margin, raising cigarette taxes and creating a rainy day school fund

Oregon votes 2002

Jan Montry
Campus/Federal Politics Reporter

Oregon voters approved two ballot measures in a special election Sept. 17, both fixing a small percentage of the state budget shortfall and giving immediate funding to K-12 schools for this year.

The two ballot measures were referred to voters during the Legislature's third special session in June to help fill what was then a \$750 million budget hole. The money raised by the two measures will not affect the current \$482 million budget shortfall.

Measure 19 will convert the education endowment fund — which is funded by the lottery — into a rainy-day account for K-12 education. The measure will then borrow \$150 million from the fund for this school year.

Measure 20 will increase the current state cigarette tax by 60 cents, ending in a total of \$1.28 per pack. This new tax is expected to raise \$70.7 million in the current biennium and be mostly dedicated to compensating for earlier Oregon Health Plan cuts.

Barb Bellamy, spokeswoman for the 4J school district, said the success of Measure 19 will open \$4.7 million for schools.

Election results

Measure 19	Yes	No
Statewide	62%	38%
Lane County	62%	38%

Measure 20	Yes	No
Statewide	64%	36%
Lane County	65%	35%

SOURCE: Secretary of State

"We already had to deal with an \$8 million shortfall going into this year, so we've had to make reductions," she said. "Measure 19 will at least mean that balancing the budget will be a lot less drastic." Bellamy added that schools are now dependent on an income tax increase to receive the rest of their funding.

"(Measure 19) is really good for us, as well as other schools in Oregon," she said. "But there is \$3 million we still don't know about."

The success of Measure 19 could adversely affect higher education students, however.

The Oregon Opportunity Grant, which gets 25 percent of endowment fund interest to help college students pay for school, will lose approximately \$3.5 million in funding during the next biennium because of Measure 19. As a result, about 3,300 college students will not be able to receive a portion of the grant.

"I think that it's really

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Cigarette tax increase

In a Sept. 17 special election, Oregon voters approved Ballot Measure 20, which increases the state's cigarette tax by nearly 50 percent, from 68 cents to \$1.28 per pack.

According to a recent survey by the University Health Education program, 22 percent of University students say they use tobacco.

English major Martha Grover said she would most likely quit smoking with the increased cigarette tax. "Cigarettes aren't a necessity," she said, "they're a luxury, but there are other luxuries which could be taxed!"

Grover said she has a problem with the state lottery as well as cigarette taxes, which she sees as tantamount to encouraging people's addictions. It's unfair for the government to target one group, she said, especially when "a lot of smokers are poor, and they won't quit."

Bruce Blonigen, an associate professor in the department of Economics, said the problem facing the state government is a need for stable tax bases. The cigarette tax, Blonigen said, allows legislators to get a good sense of future revenue based on current demand.

Legislators are "hanging their hat on the fact that cigarettes are fairly price insensitive," he said.

Architecture major Asmund

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Ballot holds 12 new measures

In November, citizens will vote on issues concerning minimum wage, genetically altered food and health care

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As the November election creeps closer, Oregon could undergo sweeping changes, including a 40-cent increase to the minimum wage and required labeling of genetically engineered foods.

This year, Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury released 12 new ballot measures, many fewer than the 26 measures released in 2000.

Despite the low number, however,

er, battles between supporters and opponents have already begun, most vocally in relation to two measures.

Measure 27, which would require labeling of genetically engineered foods in Oregon, is especially controversial in the food industry. In the measure, "genetically-engineered" food is defined as "(food) produced or altered with techniques that change the molecular or cell biology of an organism by means ... not possible under natural conditions or processes."

Katelyn Lord, a chief petitioner for Measure 27, said the measure is based on the right for consumers to know what they're eating.

"Our interest is from the consumer's point of view," she said. "Giving people a choice and making

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Ballot measures

Measure 14: Removes historical racial references in obsolete sections of Oregon Constitution.

Measure 15: Authorizes state to issue general obligation bonds for seismic rehabilitation of public education buildings.

Measure 16: Authorizes state to issue general obligation bonds for seismic rehabilitation of emergency services building.

Measure 17: Reduces minimum age requirement to serve as state legislator from

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