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★ AMERICA VOTES 2004 ★

Doctors donate record funds for ballot measure

A medical malpractice award cap measure is one of several to garner millions from activists

BY BRAD CAIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALEM — A ballot measure to restore Oregon's \$500,000 cap on medical malpractice awards has sparked a record \$7 million campaign, with doctors far outpacing trial lawyers in donations to the fight.

Meanwhile, campaign finance reports show the battle over a measure that would abolish SAIF Corp., the state-owned workers' compensation insurer, has reached almost \$4 million.

And national gay rights groups have given big donations to defeat a gay marriage ban, one of the six initiative measures on the Nov. 2 ballot.

The big spending on the malpractice measure should come as no surprise to Oregonians who have been hit with several weeks of TV ads from both sides of the measure intending to place a \$500,000 limit on "pain and suffering" awards.

The Yes on 35 campaign has raised \$5.1 million to date, about 90 percent of it from hospitals, medical groups and 3,000 doctors who say limits are needed to curb rising malpractice insurance rates.

The group that is leading the opposition to Measure 35 reported raising nearly \$2 million. Campaign spokesman Charlie Burr said about 75 percent of it comes from trial

lawyers and law firms who say such limits violate people's rights to have juries decide damages in medical malpractice cases.

Meanwhile, in the battle over Measure 36 — the proposed ban on gay marriage — opponents have reported raising nearly \$1.1 million — about half of it from national gay rights groups.

The reports showed that the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in New York has chipped in \$500,000 to the effort to defeat the measure while another \$139,000 comes from the Human Rights Campaign in New York.

The group that's sponsoring the measure reported raising and spending about \$660,000, in hopes of persuading voters to make Oregon the latest state to ban same-sex marriage.

The largest single donation was \$15,000 from Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Portland, campaign spokesman Tim Nashif said, adding that the campaign also received a \$200,000 loan.

Opponents of Measure 37, which would require governments to either pay compensation to landowners when government rules reduce property values or waive the rules, have raised more money than backers.

The No on 37 committee reported income of more than \$1.1 million

and spending \$473,000 as of mid-September.

The group 1,000 Friends of Oregon, an organization that watches over government enforcement of the state land use planning laws, contributed the most against the initiative at \$111,000.

John Gray, a retired Portland businessman and resort developer, and Edmund Hayes of Portland each donated \$100,000 to the opposition campaign.

The main group backing Measure 37 is the Family Farm Preservation political action committee, which is heavily funded by the timber industry. The organization reported campaign income of \$811,000 including money carried forward from a previous report.

The biggest contribution was \$65,000 from Seneca Jones Timber Co., Eugene, followed by \$50,000 each from RSG Forest Products, Kalama, Wash., and the Swanson Group wood products company of Glendale.

Proponents of the initiative to expand Oregon's medical marijuana law reported raising \$521,000 — although most of it came in the form of a \$476,925 "in-kind" contribution from the Marijuana Policy Project, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group.

In-kind contributions generally are in the form of donated services or office space in lieu of campaign contributions.

Hurricane leaves thousands injured, dead in Haiti slums

200,000 are without shelter and many have no water one week after Tropical Storm Jeanne blasts Gonaives

BY PAISLEY DODDS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GONAIVES, Haiti — Doctors are performing amputations without electricity or running water while waste from this city's shattered sewage system contaminates mud and floodwaters, infecting wounds that threaten to turn gangrenous.

More than a week after the passage of Tropical Storm Jeanne, the calamity in the northwest city of Gonaives has overwhelmed Haitians and foreign rescue workers.

Thousands remain hungry. Jean-Claude Kompas, a New York doctor who rushed to his native Haiti to volunteer his services this past week, says he has treated 30 people for gunshot wounds received in fights over scarce food. Another of his patients was a child whose finger was chopped off with a machete — possibly also over food.

Jeanne killed more than 1,500 and left 200,000 homeless in the northwestern city of Gonaives. With another 1,000 people reported missing, the toll is sure to rise.

"It's sad but true that the missing will slowly be started to be counted among the dead," Brazilian Army Gen. Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira said.

On Saturday, Pereira rushed 100 Uruguayan and 50 Argentine troops to Gonaives, where gangsters and ordinary citizens have been looting food aid. They reinforced 600 international troops and police in the city.

Still, Pereira said he could use

more help to ensure security of food convoys and at food distribution points, which he said increased from two to four on Monday for the 250,000 residents.

"If we had help from the National Police of Haiti, we could possibly increase the aid distribution points," he said.

But Haiti's police force remains demoralized, understaffed and poorly equipped, since rebels chased them from their stations, killing dozens, in a February uprising that led to the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Haitian riot police sent to help keep order last week were stoned by hungry and traumatized residents.

Pereira said many storm survivors are suffering from diarrhea, while others, including many children, had infected wounds. Some had gangrene, and Argentine doctors had performed at least three amputations under primitive conditions, he said. Most injuries are gashes from collapsing roofs or pieces of zinc roof hidden by the mud that still covers the city, where most walk barefoot.

"They have minimal conditions," Pereira said. "You have to understand that there isn't even a hospital there. It's very difficult." Gonaives' general hospital was half buried in mudslides and floodwaters believed to have killed many patients.

A makeshift hospital has been set up in two rooms of the State University, with six stretchers on the floor of one room serving as a ward, and two

tables in the second room an operating theater. On Sunday, doctors amputated the gangrenous leg of a man who died the next morning.

Kompas, who wore green surgeon scrubs drenched in perspiration, said most cases he treated were open wounds infected by bacteria in the contaminated water, including ones that can lead to gangrene.

He expected to see cases of tetanus soon he said, and without X-ray machines, not enough antibiotics, not enough anesthesia and bacteria in the water, he expected the situation to grow worse.

Many nations and aid groups have sent plane loads of relief supplies to Port-au-Prince. But getting them to Gonaives, and then to the people who need them most, is a challenge.

Normally, it would take four hours to drive the concrete road — worn to bedrock in parts — that runs 90 miles northward from the capital to this city. Since the storm, a 4-foot-deep lake has formed just before the entrance to Gonaives; the lake is now littered with mired aid trucks that could not make it through.

Successive Haitian governments, greedy and corrupt, never have provided fundamental services for Haitians, who always managed to fend for themselves in the informal sector that accounts for 80 percent of the economy.

Even before the storm, most residents of Gonaives, as in other Haitian cities, used wells and springs for water. There are always shortages of running water and electricity in Haiti.

Associated Press reporter Alan Clendenning contributed to this report from Sao Paulo, Brazil.

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