

Voters pass health care tax measure

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Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

In a referendum pitting new taxes against health care coverage, Oregonians voted Jan 23 to back the Legislature's plan for keeping 350,000 low-income residents on the Oregon Health Plan.

According to unofficial election returns, 60.8 percent of voters supported Measure 101, while 39.1 percent voted against. Statewide voter turnout was at 32.4 percent, according to the Secretary of State's website.

"I'm especially proud of our state tonight," Gov. Kate Brown said in a statement. "The voters have said loud and clear that everyone deserves access to affordable health care."

The law, passed during the 2017 legislative session, was referred to voters by a handful of Republican lawmakers who saw the taxes as unfair.

The state estimates that the referred portions of the law account for between \$210 million and \$320 million in state revenue, the loss of which could have resulted in possible reduction of federal funds by between \$630 million and \$960 million. The taxes will be paid by health insurance companies and some hospitals

"I don't know that we're going to close the gap," said "no" campaign leader Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn. "They're going to win, ultimately."

Lawmakers crafted the legislation to maintain health insurance coverage for about 350,000 Oregonians on the Oregon Health Plan. The federal government reduced by 5 percent last year the amount it would pay for individuals newly eligible for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

Without additional funds or cuts elsewhere, hundreds of thousands of low-income people could lose coverage.

The law, HB 2391, was a compromise that took months to put together. Those supporting Measure 101 said it was the only option to fund the health plan without kicking people off their health insurance.

Parrish disagreed with this conclusion. She, along with Reps. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford, and Cedric Hayden, R-Roseburg, were the chief petitioners of the underlying referendum that got Measure 101 to the ballot.

"At the end of the day, we had two goals: Let voters vote and then go out



Jessica Keck of Salem drops off a ballot as Nate Braun works security at the Marion County Elections park-and-drop site in the parking lot of the Walmart on Commercial St. SE in Salem on Jan. 22. PHOTOS BY ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

there and really educate people about what's happening in our health care system," Parrish said.

Parrish was vocal from before the referendum process even began that Democratic lawmakers were undermining her attempt to bring the issue before Oregon's voters, primarily by scheduling the vote for January.

The measure only qualified for the ballot in mid-October, and the January vote gave Parrish and her compatriots much less time to convince potential voters statewide. They also raised far less money than the "yes" campaign — more than \$3 million compared to less than half a million — which she said compounded the issue.

As the results rolled in, Parrish reiterated her belief that lawmakers "rigged" the election.

Those who supported the decision to move the election date to January said it was necessary to give legislators an opportunity to plug the budget gap that would have resulted had the measure failed.

The 2018 short legislative session



Dillon Benham works security at the Marion County Elections park and drop site in the parking lot of the Walmart.

would have been the only opportunity.

That budget crisis would have also required politicians to divert their attention toward plugging the hole, making it harder to pass major legislation, namely the Democrats' big "cap-and-invest" greenhouse gas emissions cap bill.

"With this vote by the people, the decks are cleared for the legislature to work on other priorities like clean air protection and growing jobs in the booming clean economy," said Tera Hurst, executive director of Renew Oregon, a coalition of 700 Oregon businesses and organization working to pass the carbon emissions bill.

But the budget is sure to come up in one way or another, other said.

"It may be a win, but we aren't out of the woods yet," said Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem. "Our budget focus must now shift to the February forecast and the effects federal tax changes will have on state revenue."

Advocates on both sides of the argument said that a January election would have lower turnout than one during a general election in November.

The last statewide January special election was in 2010, when voters approved tax measures 66 and 67 by 100,000 votes a piece. About 62 percent of registered voters took part in that election.

Oregon saw a turnout of 80.3 percent during the most recent general election in November 2016.

The statewide results of the 2018 special election so far mirror those in Marion and Polk Counties, where the support for the measure is leading 10 points and seven points, respectively.

In a bit of an experiment Tuesday night, Secretary of State Dennis Richardson announced the results via a livestreaming video on his Facebook page as the returns simultaneously appeared on the "results" webpage.

He said the video is an attempt to connect with Oregonians interested in the results of the election, but not in the habit of going to the Secretary of State's website.

"We need new and novel ways to engage younger voters and reaffirm that this is their government too," Richardson said in a statement announcing the decision.

The initial numbers Richardson announced were different by a couple points favoring the "yes" side than those seen on the Secretary of State's website minutes later, but updates online continued through the night.

Contact the reporter at cradnovich@statesmanjournal.com or 503-399-6864, or follow him on Twitter at @CDRadnovich

OBITUARIES

Ronald John Doran

Feb. 27, 1922 — Jan. 21, 2018

Ronald John Doran, 95, passed away on Jan. 21, 2018, in Keizer. He was born on Feb. 27, 1922, to John and Barbara (Sandarg) Dombrasukas in Hamilton, New York. He served in the Navy from 1943-1946 before joining the Air Force in 1950. Ronald married Afke Sieswerda.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Afke; his brother, Truman; and children Madeleine, Tony and Natalie. No services are being held at this time. Arrangements with Unger Funeral Chapel, Silverton.

Lynn Burkhard Keith

Surrounded by family, Lynn Burkhard Keith passed away from complications of Alzheimer's Disease on Dec. 15. She was 78 years old.

Born in 1938 in Dallas, Texas, Lynn was the second of six children born to Ernst and Erna Burkhard. She graduated from Texas Women's College with a degree in nursing. In 1960, she married James Stuart Keith, an aerospace engineer, and had

three children. Suddenly widowed at the age of 37, Lynn remained single for the rest of her life while dedicating herself to a career in nursing and raising her three children: Walt Keith, a pilot with United Airlines; Alice Keith, a computer scientist with Lockheed Martin; and Marion Gilliam, a teacher.

Lynn was a lifelong member of the Lutheran church and a devoted congregant of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Nassau Bay, Texas. When Lynn moved to Oregon in 1999, she joined St. John's Lutheran Church of Salem, then Immanuel Lutheran Church in Silverton, where she was a member until her death. Lynn is preceded in death by her parents; her eldest brother, Bob Burkhard; her husband Stuart Keith; and her daughter, Alice Keith. She is survived by her brother, James Burkhard; sister Elizabeth Jacobs; brother Donald Burkhard; and brother Rev. Kenneth Burkhard. She is also survived by her children and their spouses: Walt and Jenny Keith of Denver, Colorado and John and Marion Gilliam of Silverton. Her grandchildren include Wesley Keith of Denver, Colorado; Megan Keith of Denver, Colorado; and James Gilliam and Reid Gilliam of Silverton.

Memorial services for Lynn took place Sunday, Dec. 17, at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Silverton and also at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Texas on Thursday, Dec. 21. Lynn was laid to rest in Texas near her husband and daughter.



Ronald Doran



Lynn Keith

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