

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

**FROM THE ALBANY DEMOCRAT HERALD**

**A framework for ballot measures**

Oregon voters will be facing an unusually light load of statewide ballot measures in this November's election.

Just five statewide measures appear to have qualified for the ballot. Over the last two decades, Oregon voters in an even-numbered year have been forced to plow through an average of 14 such measures.

The number of measures on the ballot could have been much higher: According to the website Ballotpedia, roughly three dozen ideas for measures failed to earn a place on the ballot.

But the measures that earned a spot on the ballot likely will trigger some heated electoral battles. At least two of them touch on hot-button issues across the nation: immigration and abortion. Two of them, proposed amendments to the state constitution, deal with tax issues. And the fifth measure, referred to voters by legislators, deals with affordable housing.

Here are summaries of the measures that will appear on the ballot. (As far as we could tell, the numbers of the measures as they will be listed on the ballot have yet to be assigned.)

Initiative Petition 31, the first of the two taxation measures, would amend Oregon's Constitution to require a three-fifths vote in the Legislature to trim tax breaks or raise fees. Already, such a vote is required to impose new taxes; this measure would extend that supermajority requirement to other means in which the state tries to raise revenue.

The other taxation proposal, Initiative Petition 37, would amend the state constitution to ban taxes on food.

The immigration proposal, Initiative Petition 22, would repeal Oregon's 1987 sanctuary law, which prohibits state and local law enforcement officers from helping to enforce federal immigration law.

Initiative Petition 1 would prohibit state funding for abortion, which is currently covered by Oregon's Medicaid program and public employees' health insurance.

The legislative referral in this year's mix is Referral 401, which would allow local governments to issue bonds to pay for affordable housing projects that involve non-profits or other nongovernmental entities.

If you're searching for a framework that will help you assess these measures, consider these points:

A measure to amend the state constitution, in our view, must meet a higher standard than a statutory measure. So here's the question: Does this proposal absolutely need to be embedded in the constitution? A "no" answer suggests that you should vote accordingly. What is the potential financial impact of the proposed measure?

Voters sometimes approve costly measures without worrying about how to pay for them. But state officials said last week that, by and large, this year's measures either will have limited financial impacts or impacts that are difficult to predict, although that preliminary assessment could change.

The possible exception is the abortion measure: A draft financial impact statement said it could result in a net annual cost to the state of \$19.3 million due to increased births and the need to provide health care and other support for low-income families. But the statement also found the state could receive an additional \$14.5 million each year from the federal government for those programs.

Should the measure be taken up by the Legislature instead? Oregon voters love their ballot measures, but some topics are complicated enough they deserve detailed scrutiny from legislators, with ample opportunity for public input.

Finally, remember this: When in doubt on a ballot measure, "no" usually is a honorable vote.



**Your views**

**Alexis: Kudos to ER staff**

To the Editor:  
Recently, I thought I was having a heart attack and my wife drove me up to the Grande Ronde Hospital Emergency Room. I went through several tests and it was determined that I did not have a heart attack. It was something not quite that serious. We were there four and a half hours. They were very careful, serious and professional in my evaluations and treatment. The whole staff gets kudos.

Fred Alexis  
La Grande

**Jones: Pardoning the Hammonds was the right thing**

To the Editor:  
The Hammond pardon

was secured by a great many people. It was like a huge jigsaw puzzle with many different pieces that all had to go together at the right time to make it happen. Everyone was working to correct and make right a grave injustice.

Congressman Walden was a big piece of the puzzle to help secure the presidential pardon for Dwight and Steven Hammond of Harney County. Walden did the right thing. Those of us in CD2, who can actually vote for Walden and really know the issues, are grateful for his help.

Those who are familiar with the case and issues are fully aware the pardon was justified. The Hammond family is a ranching family in Eastern Oregon who help feed the world. They are not domestic terrorists.

Now, in comparison,

President Obama pardoned more than 600 individuals. Most were hardened criminals dealing in hard drugs, theft and other crimes that are a threat to society. He let these types out on society. Where was the hue and the cry about these pardons?

Thank you, Congressman Walden, for doing the right thing.

Suzan Ellis Jones  
Bridgeport

**Trost: Hammond pardon 'a win for justice'**

To the Editor:  
I support Greg Walden for his efforts and success in which he lobbied the White House for the pardon of Dwight and Steven Hammond. Thank you also to the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and Interior

Secretary Ryan Zinke who also supported the Hammonds.

It seems that the Obama administration was overzealous in going after the Hammonds. The Hammonds are not terrorists — they're ranchers. They know how to take care of the land because it's their livelihood. That administration obviously did not understand ranching or even the West, for that matter. The Trump administration knows and appreciates ranching communities and what they can provide.

I also agree with what Walden said about President Trump's decision for the pardon. He said the decision was "a win for justice, and an acknowledgment of our unique way of life in the high desert, rural West."

Patty Trost  
Unity

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