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Rebecca Tweed, head of the anti-Measure 97 campaign, said a large coalition of consumers and businesses helped defeat the corporate tax proposal.

## With Measure 97's defeat, \$1.4 billion deficit looms

Legislature must deal with shortfall

By PARIS ACHEN  
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — After voters defeated Measure 97 Tuesday, the battle over increasing taxes on corporations is likely to rage on in the Oregon Legislature in 2017.

Measure 97 failed Tuesday 58 percent to 41 percent. The measure would have levied a 2.5 percent tax on certain corporations' Oregon sales exceeding \$25 million per year.

The measure was opposed by a coalition of business interests, including many from Oregon's agriculture sector.

Lawmakers plan to propose a more "reasonable" proposal next session to offset a \$1.4 billion revenue shortfall in the 2017-18 budget, said Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton.

"I think policy will be developed by lawmakers and interested parties at the next session," said Rebecca Tweed, Defeat the Tax on Oregon Sales campaign coordinator. "Our coalition came together for the purpose of defeating this \$6 billion tax on sales, and we're thankful we were able to do that."

Proponents of Measure 97 vowed to lobby lawmakers to make large corporations pay a larger share of Oregon's tax revenue and protect investments in education and health care, which the measure was intended to support.

"We are going to keep fighting," said Ben Unger, campaign manager for Yes on 97.

The campaign was scheduled to release details of its next steps at a news conference Wednesday, Nov. 9. Unger declined to comment Tuesday on whether the public employee union-backed

**"Voters didn't buy claims that the \$6 billion tax, based on business sales instead of profits, would not increase consumer costs."**

Rebecca Tweed, Defeat the Tax on Oregon Sales campaign coordinator.

Our Oregon would attempt another ballot measure in 2018.

A coalition of businesses raised a record-breaking \$26.5 million to thwart the measure. Proponents raised about \$17.7 million. The ballot measure was the most expensive in the state's history.

"Voters didn't buy claims that the \$6 billion tax, based on business sales instead of profits, would not increase consumer costs," Tweed said. "And they understood that the money raised could have been used any way legislators wanted to spend it."

The opposition's blast of advertising on television, ra-

dio and social media drove home projections by the non-partisan Legislative Revenue Office that consumers ultimately would pay for much of the measure in the form of higher prices. The office estimated that the typical family would pay about \$600 more per year under Measure 97.

Unger said Tuesday his only regret during the campaign was that Yes on 97 failed to raise as much money as the opposition.

He said he believed his campaign's message resonated with voters.

"We didn't win this election this time, but we did win the debate," Unger said.

## Oregon GMO mediation needs legislative fix

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Press

A legislative mix-up has blocked the Oregon Department of Agriculture's implementation of a mediation program for growers of conventional, organic and biotech crops.

A lack of interest in the program, however, raises questions about its necessity.

In 2015, Oregon lawmakers passed House Bill 2509, which created mediation protocols for growers who believe nearby farming practices are interfering with their operations.

While the wording of the legislation is broad, it was considered a compromise bill to soothe conflicts among producers of genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, and their neighbors. Another proposal to create "control areas" where GMOs would be subject to restrictions died in committee that year.

When the ODA began the rulemaking process for the mediation program, the agency discovered it lacked the authority to legally implement it.

Another bill passed in 2015, House Bill 2444, clarified language related to mediation by the agency and removed key provisions that ODA relied upon for the GMO mediation program.

"Through the hustle and bustle of the legislative session, it wasn't cross-checked with the other mediation bill," said Kathryn Walker, special assistant to ODA's director.

The problem will require a legislative fix during the 2017 session, she said. "There is interest in correcting the situation."

Since the law was passed, though, the agency has received no requests for mediation under the program, Walker said.

Growers can seek similar mediation through the USDA, but none have expressed interest with that agency, either.

Problems with cross-pollination among GMOs and other crops aren't prevalent, said Barry Bushue, president of the Oregon Farm Bureau.

"My guess is there's probably not a lot of need for it," Bushue said of the GMO mediation program.

Bushue pointed to a USDA survey that found only 92 organic farms across the U.S. experienced crop losses from GMOs between 2011 and 2014, while the nation has more than 14,000 organic farms.

"It's incredibly small," he said.

Oregonians for Food and Shelter, an agribusiness group, wants to know what kind of problems exist, but the lack of conflicts reported to ODA or USDA indicate they're likely minimal, said Scott Dahlman, the group's policy director.

"It speaks volumes to the fact that farmers know how to work together and find ways to figure it out themselves," he said.

It's possible that some conventional and organic growers haven't sought help from the mediation program because they see it as bureaucratic, said Elise Higley, director of Our Family Farms Coalition, which supports GMO-free zones.

Perhaps the legislative fix required for the program will allow lawmakers to revisit a 2013 bill that pre-empted local ordinances from restricting GMOs, she said.

Rather than have a mediation program to deal with the consequences of cross-pollination, farmers would benefit more from a system that prevents problems in the first place, Higley said.

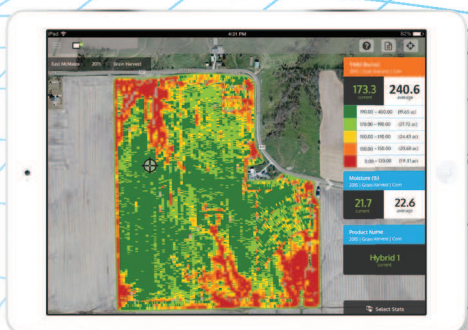
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