

ELECTION '94

just out's guide to the wonderful world of politics

Oregon's lax initiative process has created a political quagmire. This year's ballot has 18 statewide measures for voters to wade through. The majority of the measures endeavor to add amendments to the Constitution that would clutter and sully that instrument of supreme law for Oregon.

Maybe you are overwhelmed by the plethora of measures and are tempted to allow your voter precinct card to atrophy this election, but we can't have that. There are many important issues to be decided. We offer ourselves as your guide through this marshy wasteland of initiatives.

Here are our endorsements for you to ponder.

Ballot Measure 3

Changes deadlines for filling vacancies at general elections

✓ YES

This measure was referred to the voters by the Legislature, and is a simple, straightforward measure—the only one on the ballot—designed to ease the financial burden of filling elective office vacancies.

Ballot Measure 4

Creates a vacancy if legislator is convicted of felony

✓ YES

Also referred to the voters by the Legislature, it amends the Constitution to create a vacancy if a state legislator is convicted of a felony while holding office and prevents a convicted felon from being a state legislator until that person's full sentence has been completed, including jail time, probation and restitution. This measure does not prevent a convicted felon who has paid his or her "debt to society" from running for public office, it simply holds legislators to a higher standard. Like, they should not break laws while in office or while running for office.

Too bad Virginia doesn't prohibit felons from running for office, then Ollie North would be out of the U.S. senate race.

Ballot Measure 5

Bars new or increased taxes without a vote

✓ NO

This measure seems like a simple way for voters to reduce spending by local and state governments. In reality, it forces people to vote over and over on many financially complex issues. This measure is destructive for Oregon, and we don't need another Ballot Measure 5 haunting us for years to come.

Ballot Measure 6

Restricts out-of-district contributions to campaigns

✓ No

If this measure passed where would all the lesbian and gay candidates get the majority of their funding, when most Oregon queer dollars get sopped up by Oregon Citizen Alliance ballot measures?

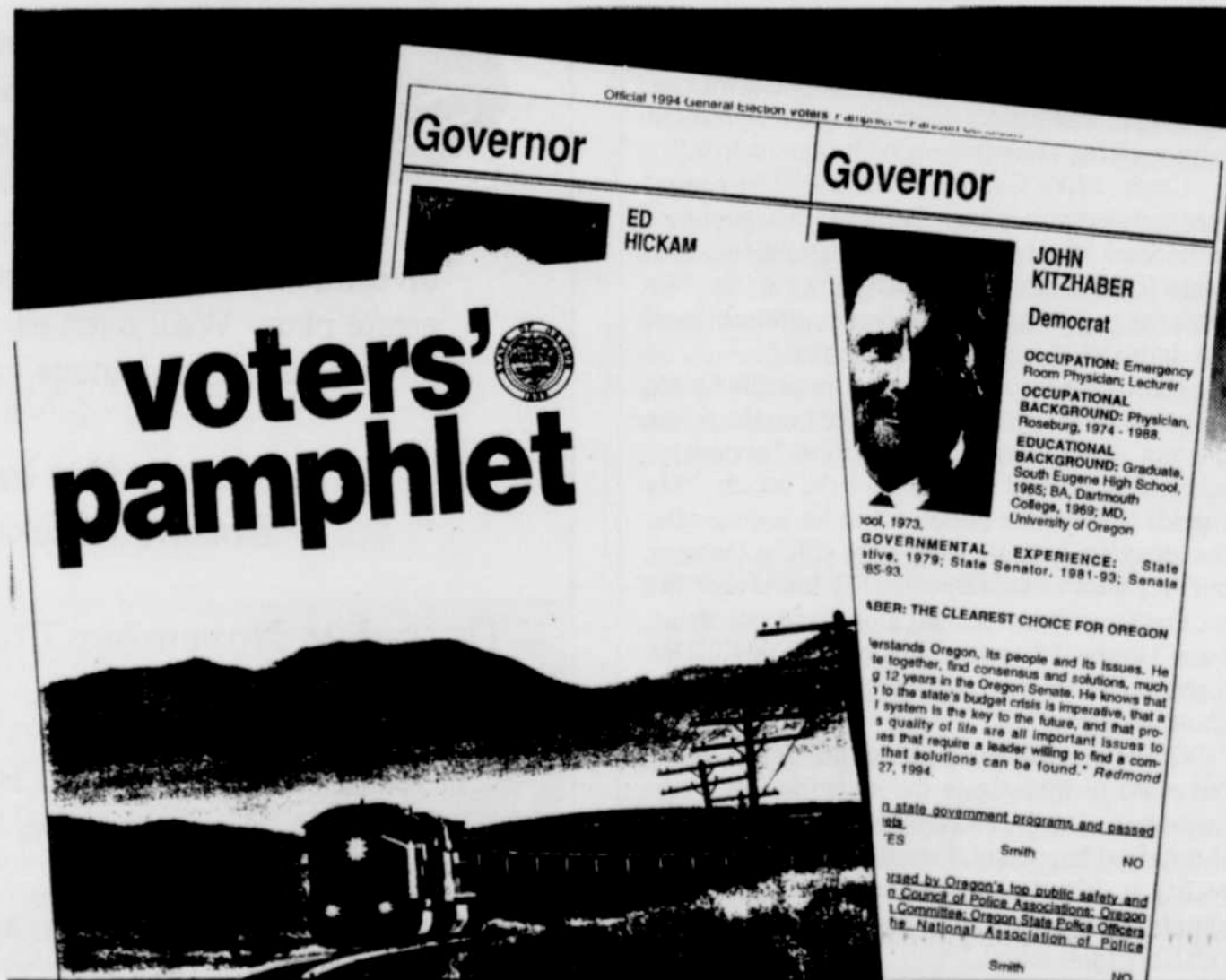
The Victory Fund would be forbidden to contribute to our candidates, along with the Human Rights Campaign Fund and others. Outside money can help us. It can work against us, such as when Pat Robertson is the contributor to radical right candidates, but, over all, let the money flow.

Ballot Measure 7

Supposedly guarantees equal protection

✓ NO

Sexual minorities and people with disabilities were sacrificed by the petitioners of this measure in their efforts to get a more "palatable" discrimination amendment into the Constitution. Katherine Draham, the chief petitioner, wanted women protected by the state Constitution. She was quoted early in the petition-gathering process as saying that if she had added sexual orientation to the initiative it wouldn't have gotten enough signatures and how could anyone argue with that. We can. Ballot Measure 7 sacrifices too much. A more comprehensive equal rights amendment that protects everyone should be on the 1996 ballot.



Ballot Measure 8

Requires public employees to help pay for pensions

✓ NO

A decade ago, state employees made a contract agreement with the state of Oregon when it was in a financial crisis. They agreed to forgo a pay raise in exchange for employer contribution to their retirement fund. This ballot measure would violate that agreement.

It is also important to note that PERS, the state employees union, has always supported the lesbian and gay community in its struggle for equal protection under the law. It's time for us to do the right thing and return the favor with a no vote on Ballot Measure 8.

Ballot Measure 9

Adopts campaign contribution and spending limits

✓ NO

Supporters can argue that deep-pocket contributors can tilt an election, and in many cases they do. We don't argue that some type of campaign-finance reform is in order, but this isn't it.

The measure as written does not prohibit candidates from contributing as much as they want to their own campaigns. That means the wealthy could buy themselves an office, while the non-wealthy would be unable to.

Harry Lonsdale is one of the chief petitioners for this measure. He lost his last bid for office when he was out-spent by Les AuCoin, due to AuCoin's support from various political action committees and other special interest groups. In the general election AuCoin was out-spent by Bob (Let-me-kiss-you) Packwood, who used his influence to squelch a national story that would have certainly changed the outcome of the election. So, money isn't everything. Vote no.

Ballot Measure 10

Restricts voter-approved sentencing changes

✓ NO

This measure is not necessary. A majority vote in the House is already required to change any bill regarding sentencing guidelines that were established by voters through initiative or referendum. Currently, there are only two prison sentences that have been created by voter initiative: life without parole, and death.

Yet another unnecessary measure to clutter our Constitution.

Ballot Measure 11

Mandates minimum sentences for felons 15 and up

✓ NO

Opponents see this measure as a grand slam, coupled with Ballot Measure 10. Both 10 and 11 are sponsored by Rep. Kevin Mannix, who seems to be touting himself as the tough-on-crime czar for the state.

Not only is this measure unnecessary, it is extremely costly. The Voters' Pamphlet estimates the financial impact to be nearly \$500 million. The majority of that money would go to the construction of more prison beds.

Oregon doesn't need to warehouse its felons; it needs innovative solutions to prevent crime. It needs to do community outreach to empower disenfranchised youth so they have other avenues to building self-worth than committing crimes. Vote no.

Ballot Measure 12

Repeals prevailing wage requirement for workers on public works

✓ NO

This was one of the most difficult endorsement choices to make. Supporters argue that repealing the Davis-Bacon act, as the prevailing wage requirement is known, would allow non-union contractors to make more competitive bids on public works projects. The opposition says it would hurt unions and reduce health care and education programs for workers. Both of these things may be true.

The bigger truth is that Oregon's prevailing wage needs to be properly set by the state to better represent the communities it is designed to protect. For example, people in Roseburg shouldn't have to pay Portland prices for labor. The problem with the system comes from the state not conducting surveys to set those wages. That forces local and state governments to depend on wages set by the federal government, which often gets its information from local trade unions.

When dealing with public projects, some safeguards need to be in place to ensure health care and equal opportunity. The prevailing wage is a good idea; a better system for establishing it needs to be implemented. Vote no.

Ballot Measure 13

Mandates discrimination against gay men and lesbians

✓ NO (duh)

The only thing amusing about this ballot measure is the very first "Argument in Favor" in the Voters' Pamphlet, submitted by the Special Righteousness Committee. Congratulations to M. Dennis Moore for securing such a primo location and for getting his word out before Lon T. Mabon. We point this out because you probably didn't waste time reading the arguments in favor, but take the time to read this one—it's worth it.

Ballot Measure 14

Amends chemical mining laws

✓ YES

This measure would add to Oregon's already tough mining law passed in 1991. It adds environmental safeguards and mandates perpetual site clean-up of open-pit cyanide mines.

The opposition to this measure is almost solely financed by the Newmont Mining Co., which has mining claims on 24,500 acres of Malheur County. It doesn't want this measure to pass, because perpetual clean-up is too expensive. In the state of Washington, Newmont Mining Co. has refused to foot the bill for clean-up costs in similar mining operations.

Oregon doesn't need irresponsible mining. This measure ensures that mining companies leave