

## Signature deadline nears

# 17 initiative petitions being circulated

Once again in Oregon, voters will be asked to make the law, with initiatives crowding the November 2006 ballot.

Seventeen measures are actively circulating this year. Oregon initiative petitions campaigns have until July 7 to turn in signatures. Not all of them will make it. But the Oregon AFL-CIO is hoping to get the jump on political season, and has started to educate political coordinators at affiliated unions about some of the measures likely to be on the ballot.

The labor federation's Committee on Political Education (COPE) has taken positions on several initiatives. It will revisit those initiatives to decide a plan of action when it meets in mid-July.

Unions will likely oppose:

- *A state spending limit - i.e., limiting spending on schools, roads, prisons, seniors.* The measure creating the most anxiety is an amendment to the Oregon Constitution that would set a state spending limit. It's modeled after a measure passed in Colorado in 1992. If voters approve it, state government spending will not be allowed to increase at a greater rate than population growth, plus inflation. That might sound reasonable, particularly to those who think state spending is growing at too great a rate. But the measure's critics say the limit puts a straightjacket on the elected Legislature, preventing it from responding to crises — like a spate of crumbling bridges, an increase in crime, or high unemployment. Plus they say, "population plus inflation" ignores fiscal realities that are a little more com-

plex. For example, seniors require more public services than the average citizen, and as the baby boomers age, there will be more seniors. A population could stay the same, and yet get older and be more expensive to serve. Plus, a big part of the state budget is health care, and the cost of health care is rising faster than inflation, which is calculated based on the cost of a standard bread basket of consumer items. Colorado saw its state services dwindle dramatically as the spending limit took its toll year after year. Last year, Coloradans voted to suspend the limit.

- *A complicated tax limitation — i.e., Bill Sizemore's long shadow.* Union foe Bill Sizemore is hampered in his political work by a court order, after a jury found systematic use of fraud pervaded his ballot measure machine. But Russ Walker and former Sizemore disciple Carol Bobo are carrying on his legacy. Their current proposal, which was written by Sizemore, would allow an "income tax deduction equal to the federal exemptions deduction to substitute for the state exemption credit." Confused? There will be plenty of time to study it before ballots are due. But basically it's a way to rewrite the state tax code and cut taxes (and therefore state revenue, and therefore spending, i.e. schools, roads, prisons, seniors, the mentally ill.)

- *A revision of campaign finance laws.* Year after year, activists Dan Meek and Harry Lonsdale have pushed tougher campaign spending limits. As they've written them, the limits would

apply to campaign contributions and independent political expenditures by unions as well as corporations. The Oregon AFL-CIO opposes them on the grounds that working people have a hard enough time getting heard without further restrictions on their unions' political activity.

A handful of measures are expected to get union support, including several that are being actively led by unions:

- *Beefing up staffing at nursing homes.* Expect to hear a lot about bad conditions in nursing homes. Unions that represent nursing homes are hoping this will be a no-brainer: require nursing homes to meet an acceptable minimal level of staffing.

- *Declaring health care a fundamental right.* If state legislator Mitch Greenlick is right, putting health care in the Oregon Constitution (alongside education) will make the Legislature do something to make sure every Oregonian has access to health care.







- *Allowing any Oregonian without prescription drug coverage to join a state Prescription Drug Bulk-Purchasing Pool.* Last year, the Legislature was too timid or too bought-out to expand Oregon's fledgling prescription drug purchasing pool in a way that made the program big enough to be most effective. So, true to the original intent of the Oregon ballot initiative process, the proposal is being taken to the people, by the people (unlike a couple of the union-opposed measures, which are backed almost entirely by out-of-state money.)

# Local Motion

May 2006

Union election activity in Oregon and Vancouver, according to the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employee Relations Board

## Elections held

Company	Date	Union	Location	Results:		
				Union	No Union	
<b>Umpqua Community College (classified)</b>	4/21	Oregon Education Assoc.	Roseburg	97	15	
<b>Armadillo Underground</b>	5/5	CWA Local 7906	Salem	8	0	
<b>CBS Radio Stations/KINK-FM (decertification)</b>	5/18	AFTRA	Salem	5	11	
<b>Oregon State Lottery</b>	5/23	SEIU Local 503	Salem	127	165	
<b>City of Forest Grove (decertification)</b>	5/25	AFSCME Council 75	Forest Grove	25	15	

## Elections requested

Company	Union	Location	# of employees
<b>Twin Oaks Rehab &amp; Specialty Care</b>	Service Employees International Union Local 503	Sweet Home	32
<b>Sherms Thunderbird (decertification)</b>	Bakers Local 114	Roseburg	7
<b>Washington Demilitarization (decertification)</b>	Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 290	Hermiston	8

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Jay A. Bormann  
G.D.A. President  
I.A.M member of Local Lodge 63

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