

# Oregon AFL-CIO endorses two ballot referrals: Measures 49, 50

SALEM — The Oregon AFL-CIO is getting behind a land-use reform proposal and a cigarette tax increase to fund health care — two ballot measures that will go before voters in November. Both are referrals from the Oregon Legislature.

This year's Ballot Measure 49 would modify 2004's Ballot Measure 37 — a property rights measure that voters approved by a three to two margin. Measure 37 said governments would have to pay land owners whenever new land use restrictions reduce property value — or else not enforce the new rules on the old owners.

Measure 49 limits those special rights to property owned by individuals, not corporations, and it reinstates local zoning restrictions and state land use rules against putting large residential developments on farm or forest land. Under Measure 49, individuals could build up to three homes on their property if they were allowed to do that when they bought it, or up to 10 homes if the new rules caused substantial loss of property value.

Measure 49 also expands the Measure 37 property rights, allowing

landowners to transfer the building rights to new owners and surviving spouses.

"Oregonians were sold a bill of goods when they voted for Measure 37," said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain. "They thought this was about houses individuals could build on their own land. They didn't think this was about subdivisions."

After voters approved Measure 37, many timber companies filed claims seeking to put housing subdivisions on forest land.

"Measure 37 destroys what makes Oregon unique," Chamberlain said. "If big timber is allowed to make more money from developing the land than making wood products, that's gonna cost us jobs."

Besides the Oregon AFL-CIO, Measure 49 has the backing of the state's three largest public employee unions — the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, the Oregon Education Association, and Service Employees International Union Local 503, plus the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council, and state and local Farm Bureaus and

many other groups. It's opposed by the authors of Measure 37 and many timber companies.

Ballot Measure 50 would raise the state cigarette tax 84.5 cents a pack, to equal Washington's tax, and use the proceeds to pay for health care for all uninsured children and 10,000 low-income adults, and tobacco use prevention campaigns.

"We have almost 600,000 Oregonians without health care," explains Chamberlain, "and 117,000 of them are kids. You have to ask the question, 'Who pays for their health care now?' Those of us who have health insurance pay for it, indirectly."

Hospitals shift some of the cost of treating the uninsured to insurance companies, Chamberlain said, and taxpayers foot the bill when emergency responders are called to deal with preventable medical emergencies from untreated conditions of the uninsured.

The Oregon AFL-CIO fought hard to pass the kids health program this year in the Legislature.

Now it's gearing up its political network to campaign for the passage of both measures.

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