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Measures 66 and 67 win in a landslide

When votes were counted Jan. 26, it wasn't even close: The first time they've been asked to decide such a question, Oregonians said "yes" by a lopsided margin to raising taxes on corporations and the state's richest individuals.

Measure 66 — which increases the income tax rate by up to 2 percent on the top 2.5 percent of income earners — passed with 54 percent support.

Measure 67 — which raises the corporate minimum to \$150 a year and bumps up the corporate profits tax as much as 1.3 percent — got 53 percent support.

The increases were approved by the Oregon Legislature last June, but were referred to voters by a business-funded coalition that hired paid signature gatherers. The increases are forecasted to raise \$733 million over two years, which will pay for schools, social services and public safety.

Businesses and rich individuals contributed over \$4.5 million to defeat the tax increases, and filled the airwaves with ominous-sounding ads warning of job losses. Business groups — including some that last year urged lawmakers



At an election night party at Portland's Wonder Ballroom, supporters react to news that Ballot Measures 66 and 67 were approved by a sizable margin. Pictured in the center are State Sen. Jackie Dingfelder (D-Portland), Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain, and State Sen. Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland).

to raise taxes across the board to prevent budget cuts — now argued that a recession is the wrong time to raise taxes (on them).

But the "no" campaign was more than countered by union money and volunteers. Backed by a coalition that included unions, PTAs, and the AARP, the mostly-volunteer Vote Yes For Oregon campaign knocked on over 300,000 doors and called over a million registered voters. The "yes" campaign also raised over \$6.8 million, which paid for door-to-door canvasses and television ads pointing out that many banks and other big corporations have been paying just \$10 a year in state income tax.

The final percentage in favor of the tax increases was about the same level that polls showed last summer — before either campaign got under way.

The most decisive moment in the campaign, campaign manager Kevin Looper told the Labor Press, took place before it began, when Democratic legislators faced down corporate lobbyists

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Labor's message to lawmakers: 'Good Jobs, Now!'

Connie Jones was laid off in October 2009 as a building plans examiner for the City of Portland's Bureau of Development Services. Although she holds a master's degree in architecture, the 56-year-old member of AFSCME Local 189 has been unable to find a job in her field.

Jakob Juntunen, 29, is an electrical apprentice specializing in the solar industry. He worked only six months last year, resulting in the loss of health insurance for his young family.

And single mom Rachel Santos, 45, a member of Laborers Local 296, worked so little last year that she lost her home, car, and good credit standing. She is discouraged, as hopes for work appear to be many, many months away.

These and other stories were heard over and over last month during a three-city "Good Jobs Now" forum sponsored by the Oregon AFL-CIO.

"No one needs to tell America's families that unemployment and underemployment are at crisis levels," said Tom Chamberlain, president of the

state labor federation at a gathering in Portland, where a half-dozen unemployed union members told their stories to Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, State Rep. Tina Kotek, and Ed Hall, labor liaison to U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley.

Similar forums were held Jan. 14 in Albany and Jan. 20 in Bend with unemployed workers and representatives from Senator Merkley's and Congressman Peter DeFazio's offices, and Albany Mayor Sharon Konopa.

Chamberlain said the recovery package passed in 2009 helped create or save 1 million jobs, but because there was a deficit of more than 10 million jobs since the recession began, more needs to be done.

"We need jobs — and we need them now," Chamberlain said. "Wall Street has gotten its bailouts. Now it's time for Main Street to get some immediate help."

That's why labor unions are taking the lead pushing lawmakers at the state and federal level to move quickly to en-

act a robust jobs program. The national AFL-CIO has launched a "Good Jobs Now!" campaign that calls on Congress and the Obama Administration to take five steps now to care for the jobless and put America back to work.

The plan includes fixing America's crumbling schools, bridges and roads; hiring community banks to lend left-over bank bailout funds directly to

small businesses that will in turn be used to create jobs; investing in new energy systems and green technology; and increasing aid to state and local governments to help people who have lost their jobs.

Chamberlain said a \$500 billion transportation bill currently before Congress also would go a long way towards boosting the economy. "These are the

types of measures we need to get this country back on its feet," he said.

"There are so many productive people sitting on the sidelines right now," said Juntunen, a member of IBEW Local 48. "A jobs bill costs money, but the cost is far greater if we do nothing. Only a deep investment toward an en-

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'Vote Your Jobs' rally slated at State Capitol WEDNESDAY FEB. 10

SALEM — Building trades unions will hold a "Vote Your Jobs" rally on the front steps of the State Capitol at noon, Wednesday, Feb. 10.

All workers are invited to attend.

"It's an election year, and we're tired of supporting job-killing politicians," said John Endicott, business manager of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, who is coordinating the event with the Ore-

gon State Building Trades Council.

Endicott listed several proposed projects — a number of them private-sector involving no tax dollars — that are currently hung up by lawsuits and/or red tape. They include liquid natural gas terminals along the Oregon Coast, a tribal gaming casino in the Columbia Gorge, and a new Interstate 5 bridge to replace the old one between

Oregon and Washington.

"Our message to lawmakers is, 'we're ready, willing and trained to go to work. We just need the jobs,'" Endicott said.

Local 290 and Electrical Workers Local 48 are making arrangements for bus transportation to Salem, if needed.

For more information, call Ron Murray at 971-340-3940.