

Ballot measure 6 debate

Pro

Let's face it, Oregonians are over-taxed. The government now takes four of every ten dollars earned by taxpayers. Oregon state and local governments spend more than \$5 billion each year, over \$8,000 per family of four. This state, as well as this nation, needs more tax relief.

With the rising cost of houses and the rising cost of property tax, how can a young couple dream of owning a house? They can't. We need tax relief.

Everyone pays property tax. Landlords and businesses pass these taxes on to the renters and consumers in the form of higher rents and prices. This means inflation will continue to rise if Ballot Measure Six does not pass.

Who is always hardest hit by property taxes? The poor and middle-class. Many pay a greater part of their incomes for shelter and can't always deduct the cost of property taxes from their income tax.

There is still a recession and yet, taxes and consumer goods prices are continually rising. The consumer price index was at 12.7 percent for last month. Measure Six limits increases in assessed property value to 2 percent each year, even if inflation is more. This will certainly help the senior citizens who are on fixed incomes.

Because Measure Six holds down the property tax increases to a 2 percent maximum (based on the 1977 assessment) regardless of inflated values, allowing seniors and the rest of the property taxpayers a rational and predictable tax bill for the years to come.

Ballot Measure Six will protect Oregonians from receiving additional property tax without a two-thirds vote from the public. This would cut down on needless government spending due to less taxes. A balance must be restored between those who spend and those who pay. Oregon needs tax relief, now. It just costs too much to live today.

Con

Simply put, Measure 6 is the wrong answer to the right question. It fails to solve the problem it addresses, and it causes other major problems.

The question Measure 6 hoped to answer is the undue burden placed upon Oregon property owners. The problem is that nearly all Oregon taxing districts are supported by property tax levies; the notable exception being Tri-Met. The result is that a typical Clackamas County resident may be paying 8 to 12 separate tax levies.

The obvious solution would be to provide a separate form of funding, such as a sales tax, increased income tax or a payroll tax, and then either eliminate certain property tax levies, or uniformly reduce all tax district's property tax funding.

Unfortunately, that isn't what Measure 6 proposes. Under Measure 6, all taxing districts presently funded by property taxes, nearly all School Districts, Community Colleges, Police Departments, Fire Departments, and Cities, would suffer devastating cuts without any planned replacement funding.

But, Measure 6 doesn't stop there. It would limit state bonding to a level that would close the Veterans Home and Farm Loan Program and limit new highways and regional projects. Currently 80 percent of all new houses are financed through the Veterans Loan Program. The repercussions of that in a state where the forest products industry is the second largest, are not something to lightly consider.

A second major problem is that Measure 6, partly because it was brought before the voters by initiative, is written in a way that conflicts with the Oregon Constitution. One local problem that illustrates this point is the situation the College might shortly be in. If Ballot Measure 6 passes, and the College's Tax Base passes by less than two-thirds of a majority, the College will be unable to collect a sizable portion of the tax base, even though approved by the voters.

The third problem Measure 6 brings up is what effect will it have on the current tax relief program. If Measure 6 does pass, the State will be required to increase its funding to local tax districts. Faced with both its current \$204 million deficit and the need for increased funding to local tax districts, the State may be forced to cut the current tax rebate program. Additionally, State control would increase over local issues.

When everything is said and done, Measure 6 not only doesn't solve the existing problem, but also causes other problems. What we need is positive action from our legislature, not a crippling constitutional amendment.

(Im)moral Majority

This year, like most election years, there are throngs of supposedly knowledgeable people running around telling us how we should vote. And, like every election year, most of us know better than to listen to slogan shouters.

This year, however, there's a new wrinkle. An organization has loomed up on the horizon that brings new meaning to the word outrage. The so-called "Moral Majority" hath arrived.

Following the lead of the Rev. Jerry Fallwell, one of the preachers who dominate early Sunday television, the organization first caught the attention of the media by publishing a list of issues. This organization calmly explained the way any good Christian will vote on such things as abortion, ERA, capital punishment

and gay rights, to name a few. Then they told us which politicians voted in agreement with Fallwell and his righteously indignant followers.

In recent years, nothing and no one has angered me more. First and foremost, the title "Moral Majority" necessitates an "Immoral Minority," or those of us who do not vote in agreement. How dare this cadre of conservatism tell you or me that we are a) immoral (read: unChristian) and b) possessing a minority viewpoint? What divine knowledge allows this group to possess the single, correct interpretation of the Bible?

Rev. Fallwell himself, you will remember, was the man who falsely quoted President Carter as saying something in an about hiring homosexuals at

the White House. The honorable Mr. Fallwell later admitted that this was a lie. This is the man who has the inside scoop on the Book of Books?

Two weeks ago, KATU's Sunday question-and-answer show, *Town Hall*, featured the pro and con arguments to the Moral Majority. On the program, several religious leaders of this community argued from a biblical point of view, that no man or group could define the Bible correctly, and said that they were personally in disagreement with Fallwell.

These people were denounced by the "Moral Majority."

The scene could have been filmed in 17th century England. Lack of religious freedom was one of the major reasons the American colonies were formed, wasn't it?

--J. DANA HAYNES

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office: Traller B telephone: 657-8400, ext. 309, 310

editor: Thomas A. Rhodes

assignment editor: Matt Johnson; news editor: David Hayden

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