

Oregon one few states to tax families below poverty line

BY CASSANDRA KOLSEN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Oregon's income tax system has been found to be one of the nation's least favorable for low-income families by the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Among only 16 states to impose income tax on two-parent families of four living at or below the federal poverty line, Oregon also boasts the second highest income tax bills for families earning just above it.

The federal poverty line in 2008 was \$17,165 for a single-parent of two dependant children, and \$22,017 for a two-parent family of four. However, the CBPP report released Nov. 4 states that in Oregon income tax liability begins at \$16,000 for a family of three, and \$18,900 for a family of four, when estimated to the nearest \$100. While the single-parent family of three owed \$96, the family of four at the lowest possible income tax threshold owed \$311.

"By taxing people who are in poverty we are working against efforts to support self-sufficiency," says Joy Margheim, policy analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy. "It makes it that much harder to get

ahead, because these families are incurring expenses as they try to work towards providing food, transportation, childcare and other basic needs."

Families keeping themselves just above the poverty line also face higher income taxes in Oregon than most states. A family of four earning 125 percent of the poverty line, or \$27,521, owed \$875 in 2008; a single-parent family of three making \$21,456 owed \$529.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy released a report last month explaining two measures enacted by the state legislature that attempt to create new tax revenue and address the ability of taxpayers to pay the taxes. The measures, which go to popular vote in January, will create \$733 million dollars in new revenue.

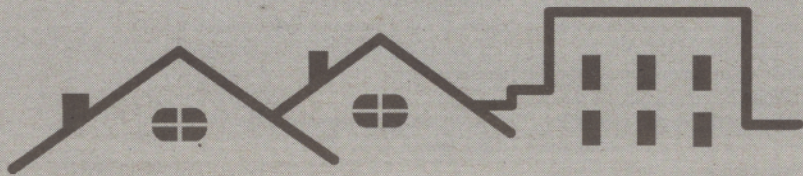
Currently the highest-income Oregonians pay the lowest percentage of their income to state and local taxes, a gap Measures 66 and 67 will begin to narrow by slightly increasing the amount the wealthiest Oregonians will be taxed. Even with the measures, the report states, those in the top one percent will still pay the smallest share of income taxes.

Weep for the Concrete Angel

By Sherry Asbury

She found a pair of mittens matted to the bottom of a dumpster; pulled them on to hide the running sores as she lifted a bird-like hand to beg. Cold worked its way through her like fire, sizzling nerve endings and bringing a flow of snot down over her mouth, which was gasping, gaping with the difficulty she found in breathing the formidable night air, steam puffing like a two pack a day smoker on a final binge.

Her eyes were nearly crusted shut. She was hungry; had been for days. Needed a fix, but no one wanted to fuck her for a hit; her eyes restlessly roving over the putrid concrete, hoping to find a little rock . . . a little rock just for her. Cops found her at 3:00 AM, hands folded as if in worship of her tiny concrete world.



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