

Ballot Measure 5

Dentists gritting their teeth

Ballot Measure 5 in the Nov. 7 general election may be of extra interest to older persons and those who have dentures.

The measure authorizes and regulates the practice of denture technology in Oregon. It would amend Oregon law to allow licensed denture technicians to make, repair and fit dentures.

Under current Oregon law, only licensed dentists are allowed to take impressions of the human mouth, make, fit or repair dentures. Presently, a dentist must supervise all denture work by a dental technician.

If passed, the amended law would allow denturists and their assistants to make, fit, repair and take impressions of the human mouth for full sets of dentures without a dentist's supervision.

A written statement from a dentist or medical doctor is required for the patient to take to the denturist stating the mouth is free of disease and the patient could wear dentures. No additional statement would be required for repairs or replacements made within one year.

The measure lists qualifications one must meet to become a licensed denturist.

A person must complete a two-year training program and have two years of practical experience or, before July 1, 1982, have six years of practical experience in making dentures and pass

a six-month approval training course. Either of these methods of study would qualify a person to take a written, oral or combination of the two examination administered by the state Health Division.

The Health Division would also be charged with enforcing the denturists' licensing law. It would have the power to give, refuse, suspend or revoke a denturist's license. The Health Division would be required to review the quality of a denturist's work.

The Health Division may not require denturists to return to school or supplement their knowledge of their field as it does with medical and dental doctors.

A council consisting of three members of the public, two dentists and two denturists would be created under this amendment to advise the State Health Division concerning the practice of denturism.

All new insurance policies after July 1, 1980, that cover work done by a dentist would be required to cover the same work if done by a denturist. Existing policies would have to comply when renewed after July 1, 1980.

The major arguments supporters of Measure 5 make are that it would give citizens a choice and it could also reduce the costs of getting dentures.

"It would give all people the freedom to choose who they want to have make their dentures," said Julie Williamson of the Citizens of Oregon for Denturism. "It would also save Oregonians thousands of dollars."

"Most of the people who need dentures are usually older and in the low income group and they can't afford six or seven hundred dollars that it would cost for a set of dentures through a dentist," she said.

Supporters also say patient health and safety is taken into consideration by the measure because it requires a certificate of health for the patient's mouth by a dentist or doctor.

"It would upgrade the quality because persons getting dentures would be dealing directly with the person who makes them," Williamson said.

Besides Citizens of Oregon for Denturism, the measure has the backing of Bob Straub, Reps. Vera Katz and Bob Marx, the Governor's Commission on Aging, The Oregon AFL-CIO, the Gray Panthers, the Oregon State Grange, the American Association of Retired Persons, the National Retired Teacher's Association and the Oregon State Council of Senior Advocates.

In the opposing camp, the Oregon Dental Association is one of the main voices against the measure.

Dr. James Darke, ODA president-elect, expressed the association's concern about the measure and its effects.

"It's a popular concept that's not totally opposed by dentists," Darke said.

"There are a number of dentists in town who are already doing work at cost for senior citizens," he said.

Clinics where elderly persons can obtain dental care are in operation providing low cost dentistry, Moore said.

After licensing, denturists would not be required by the state to keep up with progress in their field, Moore said.

"Research is constantly changing, and they (denturists) should have to change too."

He said it is a badly worded measure. He added the measure's wording and construction are more objectionable than the concept of denturism itself.

"The measure does not require that denturists' assistants have any previous training before starting work," he said. "An assistant could go in and start fitting a person for dentures the day he starts to work," he added.

"The public may perceive that getting dentures is a simpler procedure than it actually is," Darke said. Besides the work needed to make the dentures themselves, one must be specially trained, more than what denturists would have, to make certain the muscles, bones and dentures are working together properly, he said. It would take someone with much more training to assure a proper fit, he added.

The public may think the dentists are against denturists because they are afraid denturism would hurt their (the dentists') business, Darke said.

"Modern dentists are into the practice of saving teeth and taking preventative measures," he said. The amount of dentures being fitted has declined in recent years, he added.

Proponents claim dental costs are too high for elderly persons who are often on low or limited incomes, and denturism is an answer to the problem.

Greg Moore, a staff member of the "No on 5" Committee, claimed the measure is not in the best interests of senior citizens and that low cost dentistry is available, at least in the Portland area.

"We don't think Measure 5 is in the best interests of senior citizens in Oregon," Moore said.

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Searchers locate body

SEARCHERS from the Clackamas County sheriff's reserves found the body of Sandra Kim Coe, 18, of Milwaukie about one mile north of Eagle Fern Park on Kitzmiller Road near Eagle Creek Saturday morning about 11:30.

The body was found about 30 feet from the south side of the road down a steep bank in dense brush.

Ronnie Taylor Swigart, 20, a Reno, Nevada mechanic, has

been indicted by a Clackamas County grand jury for murder in connection with Coe's death.

Lee Jones, left, and Don Nissen, of Explorer Post 631 from Portland prepare radios at the search site. Employees and volunteers from the sheriff's department and its reserves, two Explorer posts, and the sheriff's posse participated in the search effort.

Both Measure 7 sides cite morality

Both sides of Ballot Measure 7 see the initiative which would prohibit spending any state money on abortions as a moral question.

To the proponents who placed it on the Nov. 7 ballot, it's wrong to use state money for something which many people see as morally objectionable.

To the opponents, it's immoral to deny a woman access to good health care because she is too poor to pay for it.

The short ballot measure states simply that it "prohibits any state agency from spending any state money for abortions, and from providing any programs or services promoting abortions."

It is followed by an estimate of financial effect prepared by the secretary of state's office that it will cost taxpayers an extra \$4 million in state money to pay for pregnancy and medical and child support assistance.

The measure would prevent the state from paying for abortions through welfare or any other means for needy women who are the victims of rape or incest.

Needy women whose health may be endangered by pregnancy or who have been

told, though genetic counseling, that they could produce deformed babies, would have to pay for an abortion on their own.

Oregonians Opposed to State Financed Abortions, the group which collected more than 75,000 signatures to place the question on the ballot, maintains that few pregnancies result from rape or incest. They also say those victims can use procedures other than abortion, such as "morning-after" pills, which are not denied state funding, Chairwoman Bea McLellan said.

The proponents call themselves "conscientious objectors." "We're like the draft objectors in the Vietnam War," said Betty Morgan, member of the group's steering committee. "We're concerned about having our taxes paid for oppressive means — the killing of innocent babies."

"Because abortion is legal, we have no way to protect developing life," she said. "The only way is to withhold funds for abortions. It does have moral overtones."

"There are some things the government shouldn't pay for," Morgan said. "Because a constitutional amendment says it's legal doesn't mean the government has to pay for it."

Taxpayers for Choice, the chief opponents of the measure, maintain that because abortion was legalized in a constitutional amendment in 1973, denying it to the poor is denying their rights. "If you're needy and unable to find a job, you don't get the right of good health care," added member Mary Heffernan. "Equality means quality health care for the rich and the poor."

The proponents of Measure 7 admit that the poor should receive some services if they can't pay for them, Morgan said. "But we don't have to go way out and give them the frills," she said.

Those against state-funded abortions say pro-abortionists should set up private charities to offer abortions to needy women, McLellan said. "If they feel it should be provided, why does this charity have to come from tax money?"

One of the big problems opponents have with the general wording of the measure is that it could prevent service groups that counsel pregnant women, from receiving any state funds. They fear it could prevent the University of Oregon medical school from teaching abortion procedures. It also could cut off funding to the amniocentesis program at the medical school, a genetics test which determines if a fetus is deformed.

"Those doctors, family planning clinics or any group which counsels pregnant women could lose their funding if they list abortion as an option for pregnant women," Heffernan said. That also is a violation of constitutional rights of free speech, she said.

Heffernan said the proponents' arguments against spending their tax dollars on something to

which they object "is their most legitimate point. But not very many of their dollars are spent on this in comparison to other things," she said. Many people object to state spending for one purpose or another, she said. "Christian Scientists object to blood transfusions, but does that mean we can't give them?"

She said her group is also very worried about the mental effects of unwanted pregnancy, especially for teenage girls. They also object to the argument that adoption waiting lists are long so women should give up their babies for adoption instead of having abortions. "In that sense, we're conscientious objectors to force one class of women, based on their economic status, to be baby producers for another class," Heffernan said.

Money is the biggest issue proponents have had to fight in their campaign to pass Measure 7. They call the state's estimated financial loss of \$4 million "a fairy tale," McLellan said.

"It's misleading, speculative and incorrect," she said. "They don't show documentation of where the figures come from." The \$4 million loss was estimated by the state Department of Human Services.

She said it does not take into account potential productivity of unborn fetuses. "Dead people don't produce revenue, which the state will lose for each life it loses," she also said that \$1.5 million of the \$4 million is federal money.

It's the organizers of the ballot measure who should have to answer to those figures, said Heffernan, adding that her group uses the state's figures in its campaign. "We're being blamed for using the crass argument of money," she said. "But the proponents first introduced this as a taxpayers' issue. It does not save money; it costs a lot more."

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