Four ballot measures:
The clubs wielded by public employee bashers

■ Last issue of THE OREGON PUBLIC EMPLOYEE showed who the public employee bashers are. Here are their clubs.

Of these measures, only the "Vote on Everything" has qualified for the ballot. But, Bob Tiernan's repeal of the 6% pickup is sure to also. All of them would have a devastating impact on public pay, benefits, and jobs.

Repeal 6% Pickup

Ballot Title: Shall the Constitution require public employees to pay part of salary toward pension, bar pension increases from unused sick leave.

Sponsors: State Representative Bob Tiernan, R-Lake Oswego, a wealthy, conservative lawmaker who rapidly rose to prominence in his first legislative session bashing public employees; Bill Sizemore, a businessman who formed Oregon Taxpayers United to bash public employees through the initiative process and made himself president.

Why It's Bad: It applies to all public employees — not just those in PERS — of the state, counties, cities, school districts, community colleges, and special districts.

It requires all to pay 6% toward their retirement. The effect of this is to cut take-home pay by 6%, and cut final average pay by 6% which means a 6% reduction in retirement benefits also.

No employer pickup of the 6% may be agreed to or negotiated on or after January 1, 1995.

No alternatives, or "replacement raises," to the 6% pickup may be agreed to or negotiated on or after January 1, 1995.

No minimum may be set for interest to be credited to employee retirement funds. Repeals 8% per year guaranteed by PERS.

Prohibits benefit credits for unused sick leave, even if provided by law or contract, beginning January 1, 1995. This would cut average PERS benefits by 5-14%.

"Vote on Everything"

Ballot Title: Shall Oregon Constitution bar new or increased state and local taxes, certain fees, and certain charges without voter approval?

Sponsors: Frank Eisenzimmer, a Gresham health club owner who, along with fellow Gresham health club owner, Don McIntire, was responsible for Ballot Measure 5; Eisenzimmer also sponsored Oregon's term limit initiative. Bill Sizemore of Oregon Taxpayers United.

Why It's Bad: This measure has already qualified for the ballot.

Applies to both state and local government taxes and fees.

On revenue issues, it changes Oregon's representative democracy to a statewide "town hall."

With some exceptions such as college tuition, it requires a majority vote for any "new tax" or "tax increases" which raises the complexity and technical nature of the decisions voters would be asked to vote on. Often, even elected representatives, who spend a lot of time learning the mechanics of government, find revenue issues confusing. The potential for false information or misunderstandings to influence voting on these issues is high.

This proposal will hamper effective response by government to unanticipated emergencies, such as forest fires, earthquakes, and floods, as well as development and planned improvements in sewers, roads, and other components of the infrastructure.

"This is the ultimate government wrecker," *The Oregonian* said.

"Fair Compensation Act"

Ballot Title: Shall the state Constitution limit the average compensation of full-time government employees to the average in Oregon's private sector.

Sponsors: Martin Buchanan, a Washington County technical writer making a cottage industry bashing public employees. Gregg Clapper, a small-time Gresham public relations operator, noted for the public employee bashing ads he puts on the radio.

Why It's Bad: Without regard to the differences in composition of the work force — where government has three times the percentage of professional jobs — this initiative would require average government pay to equal average private sector pay.

The chart below shows how the measure would lead to absurd results to require parity in average compensation between very different workforces.

CHART

Employer #1	Employer #2
2 Health Professionals @ $40,000/yr each	2 Salespersons @ $12,000/yr each
1 Computer Programmer @ $25,000/yr	1 Clerical Worker @ $20,000/yr
1 Clerical Worker @ $20,000/yr	1 Custodian @ $16,000/yr
1 Custodian @ $16,000/yr	1 Truck Driver @ $24,000/yr
5FTE = $28,200/yr avg.	5 FTE = $16,000/yr avg.

Since the measure requires only that the *average* pay be equal, it could encourage some to help themselves to a pay raise at the expense of all other employees—for example, elected officials are covered by the measure.

The measure charges the Secretary of State to hire an "independent company under contract to the state" to determine the private sector average.

A government found in violation is required to refund to taxpayers the overpayment, plus 6% interest.

A taxpayer may bring suit to enforce the measure and, if they prevail, are entitled to "all reasonable expenses of the suit, including, without limitation, attorney's fees, costs, and reasonable expenses at trial and on appeal. No government defendant shall be entitled to attorney's fees, costs, or expenses."

This initiative is a full employment act for accountants, consultants, and lawyers.

Davis-Bacon Repeal

Ballot Title: Shall Oregon statutes requiring contractors and subcontractors to pay workers on all public works projects the prevailing (union) wage rate be repealed?

Sponsors: Joe Gilliam, the Oregon director of the National Federation of Independent Business. Hawkin Au and Kathleen Eldridge, businesspersons.

Why It's Bad: This is simply another attempt to force wages and benefits in Oregon into a downward spiral. The only variable this measure changes in public contracting law is that of wage and benefit rates, which are currently pegged to the prevailing wage of the region.

This initiative forces people who work for contractors on government projects to work for less. It would increase profit margins by reducing labor costs, further eroding the standard of living for working people. Aside from the impact to the workers, the regional economy is weakened by the loss of family wage jobs.

The argument that this initiative would save taxpayers money ignores the hidden costs of cheap contractors: Forcing workers to get by without adequate pensions, health care, or wages results in these workers needing public assistance when they can no longer work, when they get sick, or when they earn too little to feed their families and qualify for food stamps. Cheap labor more often than not means cheap quality. The public does not save money on projects that must be done twice.