

"Education First" Initiative

"Me First" campaign hurts what it wants to save and endangers all other public services, as well

Budget projections for the state's General Fund in the next biennium are bad enough. But, a new initiative backed by the Oregon Education Association will turn bad to worse.

The so-called "Education First" initiative would cut a giant piece from the state budget and set it aside for schools (K-14). All other programs dependent on the state's General Fund, like human services, higher education, courts, and prisons, would be left with a smaller piece of a shrinking pie.

That's because "Education First" ignores a critical element — new revenue. Without new revenue, "me-first" proposals can only shift the burden of 1990's Measure 5 from one program to another, but never solve the overall problem of shrinking budgets.

The state's General Fund faces a shortfall of 14% in 1993-95, but the Education First initia-

tive would almost double this deficit for state programs — to an astounding 27%. A deficit of this magnitude would cost at least 4,700 state jobs.

Further, with full funding for inflation and enrollment increases guaranteed, state funding for schools would be ratcheted up in subsequent bienniums, while funding for state programs would be forced to lower and lower levels.

OEA and other supporters of the Education First initiative are using the fact that schools took worse cuts than state programs in the current biennium. But program cuts of the kind experienced by Portland and other urban school districts were exacerbated by the Legislature's move to equalize funding for schools statewide. In 1993-95, state funding for schools increased by 34%.

"Public services, including public education and services



for children, in Oregon are not going to receive the kind of support they need if any one group

takes a 'me-first' attitude like OEA has with this initiative," said OPEU/SEIU Local 503 President **Dawn Morgan**. "We're disappointed they've taken this approach and fear that all Oregonians — young and old alike — will be hurt by it."

As of early April, the Education First initiative was close to being released for signature gathering by the Secretary of State. The deadline for filing signatures for all initiatives is July 8. But, OEA has said they're allocating \$100,000 to get signatures from paid petitioners.

"OPEU members should never sign a petition for a measure they don't approve of," said Morgan, "and I'm convinced this one will end up hurting all state General Fund services, such as human services, corrections, and higher education."

Stop the pension thieves

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dren and families in jeopardy, doctors and nurses at Dornbecker Children's Hospital in Portland, forestry workers who protect our forests, and others. She said that one in every seven Oregon households has some connection to PERS.

Regarding Sizemore's attack on our wages and the PERS pickup, Morgan said, "We have not made up the pay raise we lost to help the state remain fiscally responsible in 1979. I remember that our employer brought the pickup forward as a way to save money. Instead of giving us a cost of living increase in our paychecks, they knew that if they were to pick up our PERS, they would save money and they did and they have continued to save money every year since then. It was a good idea that employers in cities, counties, school districts, and

special service districts used as a way to give their employees a cost of living increase. We must remember that the cost of living at that time was over 14%.

Morgan also stressed, "The PERS fund is invested right here in Oregon. It's millions of dollars that are spent on business, including small businesses, to try and make sure that people can flourish in this economy."

Sizemore showed his lack of regard for collective bargaining agreements: "(Public employees) will say we have a contract. We agreed to this and now you're trying to take it away. It simply ain't so."

Showing how PERS helps real people, Morgan noted that "The private pension system has treated women very poorly. Most women in jobs that are dominated by men receive no pensions. I'm proud to say that of PERS participants,

Interim Financial Report

Temporary Dues Assessment to Defeat the Tiernan Initiative and all Attacks on Public Employee Pay and Retirement Benefits.

As of April 6, 1994

Dues Assessment Received	\$35,391
Expenditures Paid	-0-

Expenditures Incurred

Gard-Strang Public Relations	\$2,000
Radio Ads (See Page 2)	\$8,000
Avenel Associates (Campaign management through November 1994)	\$23,000
Total Expenses Incurred	\$33,000

58% are women, women who will have a pension when they retire."

Morgan asked "Should we reduce everything to the lowest common denominator? Do we believe

people should live in poverty because there isn't a pension system with anything above that? Most people would rather have an independent source of income in retirement."