# Broad-based attack on rights, benefits

■ A broad range of Oregonians face attack from initiatives headed for the November 1994 ballot.

• The repeal of Davis-Bacon (guarantees union wages), while appearing to pose the most direct threat to private sector construction workers, actually will tend to depress all family wages and benefits, whether earned in the public sector or private sector.

• The OCA Initiative (which would attack civil rights and gut nondiscrimination clauses in our contracts), while appearing to pose a threat only to gays and lesbians, puts all Oregonians in jeopardy.

• The 1994 Measure 5 (which forces a public vote on all taxes and fees) will severely constrict government's ability to meet emergencies or take advantage of opportunities. The ability of public employers to meet the rising cost of living of their employees will be almost nil if this measure, already assured of its spot on the ballot, passes in November.

## *Measure 5, "ultimate government wrecker," threatens public services and pay, benefits*

The people who brought us Measure 5 in 1990 will have another measure on the November 1994 ballot that, in the words of *The Oregonian* newspaper, is the "ultimate government wrecker . . . aimed at dismantling representative government."

This measure has already qualified for the November ballot where, ironically, it will appear as Measure 5.

The measure will lock up government funding in a straight jacket that, with few exceptions, will require a vote of the people for all *changes* in taxes and fees. A vote will be required to *increase* taxes and fees; a vote will be required to *reduce* taxes and fees. A vote of the people will be required to extend taxes or fees due to sunset such as a 10¢ cigarette tax approved by the Legislature in 1993 to help pay for the Oregon Health Plan. A reasonable argument can be made, according to the Legislative Revenue Office, that the people must vote to extend tax credits or exemptions scheduled to sunset.

The measure permits government to pass through some increased costs without a vote of the people but, in the same section of the measure, it specifically excludes increases in public employee labor costs from being passed through. Increases in the cost of government due to increases in labor costs will need to be funded by taking money from somewhere else in the budget or by a money measure that will need to go to the people.

How does the measure wreck government?

• As government officials attempt to deal with increases in costs, less money will be available for cost of living increases in pay or health care for public employees.

• Government will have no control over business license fees, and they can't be changed without a vote of the people, thus reducing one of the main ways now available to control growth and to ensure that sufficient services, such as sidewalks, sewer, and water, accompany residential development.

• Taxation issues potentially will be controlled by the special interest with the money to put on the most lavish campaign, or by talk show hosts with a wide following. The potential is heightened for false information or misunderstandings to influence voting.

• Governments will be unable to deal with emergencies or to take advantage of opportunities where more money is required without going to the people for new taxes.

• There is no provision for local government to deal with emergencies. The state Legislature and Governor may deal with an emergency without a vote of the people by passing a bill by three-fourths of each house that is signed by the Governor. No similar provision allows city councils, county commissions, or school boards to deal with emergencies.

• Public higher education will go further out of reach of the ordinary citizen because college and university tuition is one of the few things not required to go to a vote of the people. As higher education loses more and more General Fund revenue because of the Legislature's inability to raise money without a vote of the people, the state System of Higher Education will be forced to raise tuition to maintain course offerings and accommodate a growing student body.

This is a bad measure for Oregonians and for Oregon public employees.

## Proposed initiative to repeal "Little" Davis-Bacon law threatens wages for all workers

Not only public employees' pay is under attack this year: The attack extends to private sector workers' pay, with implications for us all.

For years, the "little" Davis-Bacon law has worked well in this state to ensure that people who work for contractors on public contracts receive the "prevailing (union) wage" for their work.

Now, a couple of small business persons, with the support of the National Federation of Independent Business, propose to do away with that measure of fairness.

The sponsors claim that repealing the law will save the taxpayers money.

In fact, the measure will take money from workers — as family wage jobs become minimum wage jobs — and put that money in the pockets of business owners. Nothing in the measure ensures that taxpayers will see even a dime.

What this ballot measure will do is:

• Cut family wage jobs in both the public and private sectors. As the pay and benefits of any large group of jobs is cut, largely construction jobs, in this case, downward pressure is placed on other jobs.

• At a time when supposed reductions in the pay and benefits of

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