

Looking to 1998: Initiatives

It may still be six months away, however, 1998 is already showing signs of being a big political year. President Clinton's second term will be coming to a close. Vice President Al Gore will be facing growing competition for the top elected position.

Closer to home, term limits will begin taking effect on state legislators, creating new opportunities for those seeking to win back the legislature and posing new threats to those who aren't ready to relinquish power.

Next year is also shaping up as a big year of initiatives - particularly ones which attack workers, people of color and others. Bill Sizemore is moving forward with new versions of his attacks on collection of union political contributions and other attacks on workers' rights. The self-appointed tax revolt leader is also launching a new tax initiative aimed at Oregon's regional government: the Metropolitan Service District (METRO).

Sizemore isn't alone as an early filer of initiatives. He's been joined by Grants Pass ultra-conservative Jack Alan Brown who has filed a proposed constitutional amendment that would open up primaries to both parties and to independents.

Former state legislator Bob Tiernan is taking on mandatory sentences for repeat offenders, politicizing judicial elections and linking lottery dollars to college tuition.

Lon Mabon is also making an appearance with anti-abortion, anti-gay/lesbian measures and a rejected "separation of powers" initiative.

Walter Huss, a forerunner to Lon Mabon and the politically-active religious Right, has filed a proposal for a single tax - a gross receipts tax that would replace all other taxes. Huss is also moving an anti-abortion measure as well.

Finally, anti-nuke activist Lloyd Marbet has joined with former senate candidate Harry Lonsdale and the Pacific Party to move an initiative that would ban corporate and union PAC dollars.

Among this growing field, however, Sizemore continues to be the one to watch. His Measure 47 victory and the deference shown by the legislature to him during the rewrite of Measure 47 makes this effective campaigner more dangerous than ever.

For working people, winning again in 1998 means organizing and mobilizing every member in 1997.

Overview of a Few Bad Initiatives

Collection of Union Political Contributions

Sizemore has filed several initiatives aimed at preventing public unions from using payroll deduction to collect political dues or to receive a tax credit, using the process to test measure titles. One such initiative has already been withdrawn. Another is being appealed to the Supreme Court. The following titles are on file: #16 Workplace Freedom Act; #18 No Taxpayer Money for Politics; #21 Campaign Finance Reform for Employees; #26 Requires Employees Permission to Deduct Political Funds from Paycheck.

Term Limits

Sizemore has filed two term limits measures. One would amend the constitution to direct state and federal legislators to vote for congressional term limits. The other calls for voluntary term limits by congressional candidates. The titles on file are: #19 Congressional Term Limits; #27 Voluntary Term Limits Act of 1998.

Anti-Immigrant

Sharon Sheppard, Randall Killion and Robert F. Stewart, anti-immigrant activists from 1996's effort to import California's Proposition 187 to Oregon have filed two initiatives again - both aimed more at creating anti-Latino sentiments than addressing real problems. One measure would deny public benefits to and services until legal presence is proved. The second would deny drivers license eligibility unless a citizen or a "lawfully present alien."

Taxes

Walter Huss' tax initiative would create a gross receipts tax of 2.5% and, in the author's mind at least, is intended to eliminate all other taxes. This measure is the "Single Tax Amendment," #28.

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