

Measure 97: The debate centers largely on who will pay for the tax

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The poll, taken from Sept. 2 through Wednesday, found that 59 percent of 610 respondents favor the tax and 21 percent oppose it. After voters heard arguments against the measure, that support dwindled to 40 percent while opposition spiked to 31 percent. The poll has a 4 percentage point margin of error.

For instance, 65 percent of respondents said they would be less likely to support the measure if they had to pay \$600 per year in the form of higher prices and lost job growth resulting from the tax. That figure is based on a May estimate by the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office.

Similarly, 59 percent of respondents were more likely to vote for the measure if the revenue were to fill a \$2 billion annual gap in funding needed for quality education in the state. That figure comes from the nonpartisan Quality Education Commission.

When asked how the money should be spent, the most common response — from nearly a quarter of those polled — was education spending.

The citizen poll mirrors another independent survey, this one by DHM Research taken from Sept. 1 to Sept. 6, which found 60 percent of respondents support Measure 97, while 30 percent opposes it.



Yes on 97's Katherine Driessen at an interview before the editorial boards of EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

"At 60 percent (support) in back-to-back polls, Oregonians are clear they want corporations to pay their fair share," said Katherine Driessen, a spokeswoman for Our Oregon, the nonprofit advocacy group backing the measure. "When we share with voters that large and out of state corporations pay little or no taxes, they're eager to hold them accountable. They support 97 because Oregon voters know great schools and quality care for our seniors makes Oregon strong."

So far, the campaigns for and against the measure have played out mostly on social media and in front of editorial boards and civic groups.

"Generally speaking, the numbers in the polls we're seeing is consistent with polling we've seen since last fall," said Pat McCormick, a spokesman for the Defeat the Tax on Oregon Sales. "The numbers haven't changed much because there hasn't been much robust campaign dialogue."

McCormick said campaigning usually heats up after Labor Day. The opposition campaign plans to debut its first television ad sometime this month, he said.

The debate between the campaigns centers largely on who will pay for the tax. Opponents contend that consumers will pay for the majority of the cost of the tax, while sup-

porters argue that many of the large corporations affected by the tax will absorb most of the extra cost into their national pricing scheme.

The citizen poll also tested voters' position on several other measures on the November ballot.

- Measure 94 removes the mandatory retirement of judges at age 75: 53 percent oppose, 33 percent favor, 14 percent undecided.

- Measure 95 allows public universities to invest in equities: 29 percent favor, 24 percent oppose, 47 percent undecided.

- Measure 96 devotes 1.5 percent of state lottery revenue to fund veteran services: 83 percent favor, 8 percent oppose, 9 percent undecided.

- Measure 98 devotes a portion of new state revenue to fund dropout prevention, career and college readiness programs in Oregon high schools: 64 percent favor, 19 percent oppose, 17 percent undecided.

- Measure 99 designates \$22 million in state lottery revenue for outdoor education for all fifth- and sixth-graders in Oregon: 69 percent favor, 19 percent oppose, 12 percent undecided.

- Measure 100 prohibits the sale of products and parts of 12 types of endangered animals: 85 percent favor, 7 percent oppose, 8 percent undecided.



Pamplin Media Group Secretary of State candidate Brad Avakian responds to a question as GOP candidate Dennis Richardson listens. A recent poll shows Avakian has a three-point lead over Richardson, with 45 percent of voters either undecided or backing another candidate.

Poll: Democrats outpace Republicans in state election races

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Democratic candidates running statewide in Oregon are leading by varying margins, according to results of a new poll.

Gov. Kate Brown was the choice of 44 percent of those surveyed, outpacing Republican candidate William "Bud" Pierce by 17 percentage points, according to the poll conducted by icitizen, a Tennessee company. Twenty-three percent of voters were undecided on their choice for governor.

Brown's lead over Pierce mirrors the advantage Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton has over Republican Donald Trump in Oregon. The citizen poll puts her ahead, 43 percent to 28 percent. Libertarian Gary Johnson was favored by 11 percent of the respondents while Green Party candidate Jill Stein drew 3 percent.

According to the poll, the contest for the Oregon secretary of state is much tighter.

The Democratic candidate, Brad Avakian, leads his rival, former state representative and gubernatorial candidate Dennis Richardson, by just 3 percentage points.

Avakian, the labor commissioner, took in 29 percent while Richardson garnered 26 percent of the vote in the survey. Thirty-six percent were undecided and 9 percent favored a minor party candidate.

Brad Pyle, Avakian's cam-

paign manager, said Richardson's views on abortion rights and immigration are at odds with those of most Oregonians.

"The election will not be held until voters have had time to see that Dennis Richardson represents the Trump wing of the Republican Party," Pyle wrote in an email response to the poll results.

The citizen poll, conducted online from Sept. 2 through Wednesday, asked 610 Oregon voters who they would vote for if the election were held today. It has a margin of error of 4 percentage points.

Many polled remained undecided about their choice for secretary of state, as did many who were polled about the treasurer's race.

Just under half — 48 percent — of voters surveyed said they were undecided in the contest for treasurer.

Democratic candidate Tobias Read, a state representative from Washington County, received 25 percent. Republican Jeff Gudman, a Lake Oswego city councilor, took 18 percent. The third candidate, Chris Telfer, an Independent Party candidate from Bend, was the choice of 9 percent surveyed.

Voters were not surveyed on the contest for the state's attorney general, which is between incumbent Ellen Rosenblum and Daniel Crowe, a Portland public defender.

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Motel: Mayor Larson voted against appeal

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Their decision was appealed by the Calefs and Nudelman.

"That's my home," Nudelman told city councilors Monday. "I have a right to live in my own home the same way you do, in the comfort of my home that I love. And no one has the right to force me to move."

Councilors responded to his plea. "The need for a side yard setback variance was based on Mr. Simmons's building design and not circumstances unique to the property," Councilor Jay Barber said in introducing the motion to support the appeal.

Along with Barber, Councilors Don Johnson, Tita Montero, Randy Frank and Seth

Morrisey voted to grant the appeal. Mayor Don Larson voted against it.

Simmons now has the option of bringing revised plans back to the Planning Commission for approval.

"I'm happy that it's going to go back to the Planning Commission and then we'll be able to work with Antoine

to get a building that won't overwhelm our house," Dan Calef said after the meeting. "We were civil as neighbors, but we don't have any interest in selling. The offer to buy the place wasn't of interest to us."

"I'm happy with the process and happy with the granting of my appeal," Nudelman said.

Easements: Conservation component could be used to provide properties with regulatory protections

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"We didn't want to go out to farmers and ranchers with a blank slate. We really wanted to have something they could react to," Loftsgaarden said Monday during the Oregon Board of Agriculture meeting in Pendleton.

Conservation easements are usually sold or donated by farmers who give up their development rights in exchange for tax benefits and lower property values, reducing inheritance taxes.

They haven't been as commonly used in Oregon as in other states because of the statewide land-use planning system, but this system alone isn't enough to prevent the fragmentation of working lands, Loftsgaarden said.

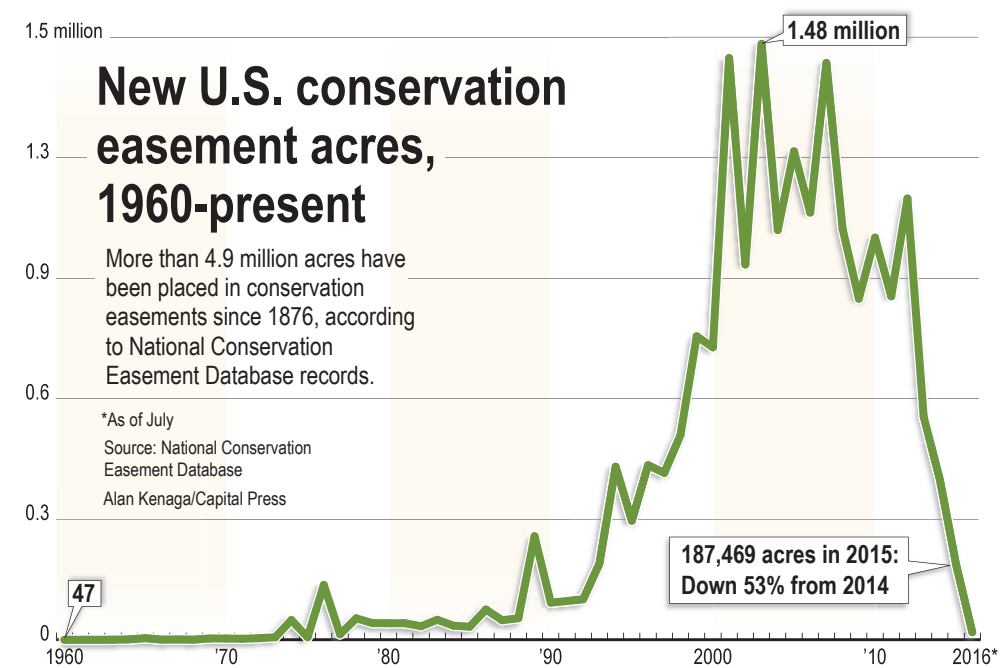
The \$4.25 million wouldn't be enough funding for everyone who wanted to sell an easement, but it would serve as a pilot program — particularly for lands inhabited by threatened or endangered species, or that are subject to urban growth boundary expansion, said Doug Kraher, a blueberry farmer who sits on a work group advising the program.

Regulatory protections

The easements will have a conservation component and could be used to provide properties with regulatory protections, offering an additional incentive for farmers, Loftsgaarden said.

Currently, a similar approach is used for forestlands where owners want to grow trees older than 30 years but are afraid of creating habitat for the northern spotted owl, hindering future timber harvest, she said.

"They want bigger trees, we want bigger trees, so what we needed to provide was that protection," Loftsgaarden said, noting that forestland owners submit management plans to



Roger Ediger, a rancher in Grant County, has decided to place a conservation easement on the land that will preserve its current condition in perpetuity. State legislators will likely be asked for \$4.25 million next year to help pay for conservation easements.

the Oregon Board of Forestry and receive regulatory assurances from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Watershed Enhancement Board currently funds conservation easements, but these are focused on preserving native fish habitat and water quality, without emphasizing agriculture, she said.

For that reason, landowners in Oregon have had trouble getting matching state funds needed to obtain federal money available for buy-

ing conservation easements, Loftsgaarden said.

"We weren't hitting for the same target," she said.

The board is funded with lottery dollars especially slated for wildlife and water quality, but the agency may seek money from the general fund or from lottery-backed bonds that don't have the same restrictions, Loftsgaarden said.

The fund would also be able to accept donations from organizations and individuals, said Kraher.

Threat of development

Grant requests would be ranked based on the duration of the proposed easement — perpetual agreements will score higher than those which end after a certain number of years — as well as the management plan and the threat of development to the property, said Loftsgaarden.

The program would be overseen by a commission consisting of representatives from the agricultural industry, the conservation community, tribes and land use experts, with the board providing staff support, she said.

Agricultural groups have asked why the program wouldn't be overseen by the state Department of Agriculture while conservationists prefer the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, Loftsgaarden said.

However, the Watershed Enhancement Board is already focused on grants and has representatives from both agricultural and conservation groups, she said. "OWEB sits sort of in the middle."

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League: 'Every one of our parks has something that could present a hazard'

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yet, but Angela Cosby, the department's director, said she and her crew have discussed the possibility.

"Every one of our parks has something that could present a hazard," Cosby said at the forum.

Oregon, she said, has an aging park system, "and that is seen most here in Astoria," which manages hundreds of acres across several dozen sites, some of which date back to the late 1800s, she said.

An uneven surface on the Astoria Riverwalk, or a crack on the basketball court, could pose a tripping hazard and give the department pause.

"I think Astoria presents a very good example of what's likely taking place across the state," she said.

Already stretched thin resource-wise, the parks and rec team has pressed the city for more full-time staff and increased funding — essentials now fully expressed in the Astoria Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. The state Supreme Court ruling has added another layer of department concern.

"Taking care and maintaining strong operations at these sites is a challenge to begin with," she said, "and then it just becomes increasingly difficult when employees are worried about being named in a suit if they're not able to take the best care, or if they accidentally forget some-

thing at the site that needed to be maintained."

She said she hopes the situation is resolved in the upcoming legislative session so that the city can keep all park sites open.

Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel said his city has consulted legal counsel to investigate how the Supreme Court decision impacts the employees responsible for maintaining their beaches, though they are jointly managed by the state. The beach environment changes daily, he said, and the danger of the ocean raises more liability questions.

"It's definitely a different world that we're living in since the Oregon Supreme Court made that decision," Cosby said.

Other priorities

The League of Oregon Cities also plans to focus on:

- Reforming the state's property tax system, in part, by tying property taxes to real market value instead of the assessed value system dictated by Measure 50, and giving voters the freedom to adopt levies that collect tax money outside the limitations imposed by the state Constitution.

- Reforming the crisis-stricken Public Employees Retirement System, which has an unfunded liability of nearly \$22 billion.

- Building a transportation funding and policy package to preserve and maintain Oregon's streets, roads and highways.