

## ELECTION '16 | MEASURE 97

## Say 'No' to fatally flawed Measure 97

Measure 97 is on the ballot because Oregon governors and legislators past and present failed to do their jobs, and now voters must decide whether to approve the largest and most controversial tax increase in state history.

If approved, the enticing but misleading measure would create a 2.5 percent tax on the gross sales of "C" corporations exceeding \$25 million. It would generate an estimated \$3 billion per year. According to the ballot measure, the money would be intended for schools, health care and senior citizens. Nobody disagrees that we need to revamp our flagging education system, improve health care, help our senior citizens and to solve the serious crisis in funding public employee retirements.

But Measure 97 isn't the way to accomplish those goals. The measure is severely flawed and could create just as many problems as it solves. Voters should see through the misleading claims of its union-backed supporters and soundly defeat this proposal.

The gross receipts tax is a tax on sales,

not profits, and in reality is a regressive sales tax that will impact Oregon consumers — and, most of all — low-income residents who can least afford it. Because it taxes only sales, it could wipe out the profit of businesses that generate high sales but low margins. Grocery stores, for example, typically have margins of only 2 percent or less.

The measure's backers assert the tax will only affect about 1,000 large out-of-state corporations like Comcast and Walmart that don't pay their fair share in Oregon. What's not in their message, though, is that those 1,000 corporations account for 88 percent of all retail sales in Oregon.

And all businesses in Oregon, not just those that fall under the tax, will feel the sting of this badly conceived measure. Businesses will see costs rise because their supplies and services, including electricity and other utilities, will go up in price. That may also happen at each step of the supply chain as goods go from manufacturer to retailer to consumer and the effect could far exceed the 2.5 percent the tax would generate.

Measure 97 supporters also say the companies will absorb the higher taxes and won't pass it on by increasing prices or cutting jobs to lower costs. At best that's terribly naive and more likely just disingenuous.

Company shareholders expect returns to grow, and it will result in increased prices all along the line. That makes the measure a hidden sales tax. It will have an impact on goods and services Oregonians purchase every day, including groceries and medicines that most sales taxes exempt. The Legislative Revenue Office, a nonpartisan state agency, estimated the increase would be about \$600 more a year in taxes per Oregonian.

The revenue office's study also projects the measure would cost 38,000 private-sector jobs during a 10-year period, while a study commissioned by supporters says it will only cost 13,000 jobs. That same study says public-sector jobs would grow by 33,000 during the same period. In either event, growing public-sector jobs at the expense of the private sector is not good economic development policy. Additionally, the revenue office

study points out that the ballot-measure language does not ensure the revenue would be used for its intended purposes. By law, the money would go into the state's general fund, and the Legislature can use the revenue directly or indirectly for other uses such as funding the Public Employees Retirement System.

We know our local schools are not adequately funded, and our students deserve better. We also know health care costs will rise, and we know the state signed a contract — an unaffordable one, perhaps, but still a contract — with state employees.

The state needs to find ways to increase and stabilize revenue streams, but a big no-strings-attached money grab bag is not the answer. Voters should defeat this measure, then hold legislators and the governor accountable for getting business and labor together. Once at the same table, they shouldn't leave until we have a plan for stable funding for Oregon schools and health care programs.

Measure 97 isn't the answer.

## ELECTION '16 | MEASURE 96

## Veterans deserve support that Measure 96 provides

It's not often that the Oregon Legislature agrees on anything unanimously, but they did when they referred Measure 96 to the November ballot.

The measure would allocate 1.5 percent of the state's lottery money to fund veterans services, which are sorely lacking in Oregon as they are throughout the country. Voters should support our veterans with a resounding "Yes" to Measure 96.

The money from the lottery amounts to about \$9.3 million annually and would likely come from funds that the state earmarks for economic development. Few people, including us, want to see those funds reduced; economic development efforts are key to the state's future, especially in the rural areas like Clatsop County. We have also argued in another endorsement on this page that the lottery pie shouldn't be sliced and used for outdoor schools at the expense of economic development. Additionally, in principle we are against tying the Legislature's hands with constitutional amendments that can only be changed at the hands of voters in times of tight revenues where legislators need to move quickly to provide more balanced funding for other needed services. It would be easy to say "No" to this measure, but we can't in good faith.

Veterans aren't a special interest group seeking money

from the state jackpot for a nonessential cause. They are Oregon men and women who served — and were willing to give up their lives — for our freedoms. They've held to the solemn promise that we as a people would care for them when they got home. But many have been ignored and have health, employment, educational and housing issues. Their reported suicide rates are twice that of nonveterans. It's clear the promise to them has been broken.

Many would argue it's the federal government's responsibility, and it is. But we owe it to those who have served to step up when that federal help isn't there.

By using lottery money and helping more of our Oregon veterans get recognized who aren't identified within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs system, it could bring additional federal funding to Oregon to bolster those inadequate VA services. That would be a form of economic development. Potentially, it could add far more money to the state's economy than it takes from the lottery proceeds.

By approving this measure, voters will be letting legislators know they place a great value on helping our veterans. Voters' approval of the measure says veterans are a priority and should have been all along.

Vote "Yes" on Measure 96 and send that message loud and clear.

## ELECTION '16 | MEASURE 99

## Voters should reject outdoor school measure

Outdoor school for Oregon's fifth- and sixth-graders is a great weeklong program, one that later in life they often recall with fond memories. It's also a program that provides hands-on learning and helps close the urban-rural cultural divide among the youngsters who participate.

The problem for outdoor school though is the lack of funding, but approval of Measure 99 isn't the way to do it. Voters should say "No" on Measure 99.

Last year, the Legislature gave the Oregon State University Extension Service the authority to help school districts provide outdoor school programs if money became available. But legislators didn't allocate any money toward the cause.

While Measure 99 would not raise taxes, it would provide a funding mechanism with the creation of the Outdoor School Education Fund that would use up to \$22 million each year in lottery money.

Oregon Lottery money is primarily used for two purposes, for public education and economic development.

Public education already gets the lion's share of those dollars, and with public education already needing more money than legislators can allocate, it's more likely that economic development funding from the lottery money would be reduced and shifted to pay for outdoor school.

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, predicted in *The Oregonian* that Measure

99 money for outdoor school would take nearly 66 percent of the \$66 million in lottery money that now is used for economic development per biennium.

That's simply too much of a hit to the state's economic development interests and engine, and it comes at a time when the state's schools have larger priorities.

Another problem with the measure is that it would deposit some of those lottery dollars in wealthier school districts that can already afford outdoor school.

Additionally, it would earmark that money specifically for outdoor school rather than allow it to be used on other programs that individual school districts may feel are more valuable for their students.

There is no doubt that for the students of outdoor school it is a rewarding and great educational experience.

The youngsters learn about themselves, their classmates and the outdoors. And at one point about 80 percent of Oregon's fifth- and sixth-graders participated in the outdoor school program. Now that figure hovers around 50 percent.

But in many school districts, individuals, nonprofits and businesses are already working together to provide money for the program with a variety of fundraising efforts. Supporters of outdoor school should focus on helping those public-private sector efforts continue and expand, while voters should say "No" on this ballot measure.

## ELECTION '16 | MEASURE 98

## Measure 98 fills educational need

In contrast to other controversial questions on the November ballot, Measure 98 will take money already collected into the general fund and earmark that it be spent on education.

It is an attempt to solve a glaring problem in Oregon — the state's dismal 74 percent graduation rate — and it comes with a reasonable price tag. The measure doesn't have any organized opposition and Oregon voters should support it by saying "Yes."

Measure 98 would require state legislators to fund dropout-prevention programs to improve the country's 47th worst high school dropout rate. It would also support career and college readiness programs — specifically vocational and career technical education — which are proven programs to keep students in school, improve their test scores and get them started on fulfilling careers. And it would give educators better tools to identify students earlier as being at risk of dropping out.

Passage of the measure would be extremely helpful to students on the North Coast with new opportunities for vocational training, potentially in conjunction with programs at Clatsop Community College, to better prepare them for the future.

While legislators have mostly paid lip service to the dropout problem and technical education programs in the past, Measure 98 helps solve that problem. Doing nothing shouldn't be an option. A study by EcoNorthwest, a consulting firm, predicts continuing on the current path would mean that at least 1 in 5 children who started kindergarten

in Oregon this year will not receive a high school diploma in 2029. That should be unacceptable to Oregon residents.

To correct that, the measure would increase money spent on each Oregon high school student by \$800 a year, pushing the annual total to roughly \$11,800. Those dollars will come from additional revenue into the state general fund. The EcoNorthwest study predicts the measure would improve graduation rates by 6 percentage points over a five-year period, which would move Oregon's graduation rate into the middle of the pack among all states rather than keep us at the bottom.

Additionally, Measure 98 doesn't require districts to offer career technical education programs, but helps pay for those who do — which means it isn't a mandate but instead a carrot to help Oregon districts appeal to a wider variety of students, including those who are in danger of dropping out.

In principle, we're against handcuffing the Legislature with specific funding requirements like this. They don't allow legislators flexibility in the case of emergency.

However, the need to provide financial support of necessary educational upgrades through the ballot box illustrates the failure of legislators to do just that. We elect our representatives to spend tax dollars as a majority of voters see fit, on programs that have been proven effective and efficient. Career technical education programs hit those marks, but legislators haven't been able to find the money.

This time, voters should take the decision into their own hands and approve Measure 98.

## ELECTION '16 | MEASURE 94

## Forced judicial retirements should be eliminated

Measure 94 would eliminate a provision in Oregon's Constitution that sets a mandatory retirement age of 75 for state judges, and voters should mark "Yes" on their ballots.

The mandatory retirement clause is a vestige from the past, and there are no logical reasons for it to remain.

The measure has no organized opposition and was spurred in part by a St. Helens attorney who was told, after a decades long career in criminal and civil law, that she could not seek a judge's seat in 2014 because of her age, which was 77 at the time.

Voters always have options at the ballot box during judicial elections, and the state's Commission

on Judicial Fitness already has a mechanism for removing judges who are unfit to serve, no matter their age.

With those two factors in place, there's no logical need for the Constitution's mandatory retirement provision, especially in a land where age discrimination in any form is prohibited in nearly all other areas.

Long-serving judges accumulate decades of experience and wisdom during their careers and Oregonians should not be deprived of their service during their day in court by an unneeded and arbitrary law.

Those jurists who want to continue their service on the bench should have that opportunity.

Vote "Yes" on eliminating that provision.

## ELECTION '16 | MEASURE 100

## An easy 'Yes' on Measure 100

There are plenty of controversial decisions to be made in November, but Measure 100 is not one of them.

The Wildlife Trafficking Prevention Act would prohibit the sale of products and parts from 12 endangered animals in Oregon. Those animals are rhinos, cheetahs, tigers, sea turtles, lions, elephants, whales, sharks, pangolins, jaguars, rays and leopards.

A similar effort passed overwhelmingly in Washington in 2015, and California has a similar law on the books. That means Oregon could join its neighbors and present a united front against importers, making it more difficult for them to find buyers throughout the United States.

And, yes, it's true that in most cases there are already federal bans on many of these items. But it's also true that in Oregon it's much more likely for law enforcement to encounter endangered animal parts on sale within state

lines, instead of on the docks. Under current law, once those products are through the port of entry, the state has no ability to ban their sale.

That will no longer be the case if Measure 100 is passed. Additionally, the law was written rationally so grandma's ivory-keyed piano is not made illegal, nor her antique ivory-handled gun or jewelry box.

It may be illegal to sell those items from here on out, but they can legally be possessed and passed to a family member.

African elephants and rhinos may seem far away, but Measure 100 is a small way to protect them. International animal welfare groups have bigger fights under way in Thailand and China, for example, but Oregon can be part of the solution in November.

Measure 100 is a clear yes.