

Elections

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proposal wasn’t ideal, supporters returned this year with a plan that includes more revenue for state and local governments, as well as stricter controls on which stores can sell liquor.

The measure will end Washington’s state-run liquor system, which was formed in the 1930s in the aftermath of Prohibition, and allow stores larger than 10,000 square feet to sell liquor. Opponents pointed to an

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exemption in the law that could allow smaller stores to sell liquor if there are no other outlets in a trade area.

Leading Democrats, including Gov. Chris Gregoire, opposed the measure because of concerns about the consequences of expanding access to liquor. A formal opposition group reiterated that point Tuesday night.

It’s not clear whether the measure will lead to lower liquor prices. That will depend on how much distributors and retailers mark up their prices, according to a state analysis.

If distributors and retailers combine to

mark up liquor by about 25 percent, that would put prices on par with current ones. The state projects that markups could be as high as 45 percent while initiative supporters believe that is unrealistic because of the competition the measure will create.

The new rules allowing retailers to buy directly from distilleries could also push prices down.

Initiative 1183 did have a broad coalition of support, drawing praise from restaurants, retailers, groceries and family wineries. Despite this, Costco was the primary funding source, with the next largest donors — Safeway and Trader Joe’s — giving just \$50,000.

The spending was the largest ever from one donor in Washington, but it wasn’t unprecedented in U.S. initiative campaigns: Last year, Pacific Gas & Electric spent \$46 million in its failed bid to curb the expansion of public power cooperatives in California.

Also Tuesday, voters approved a constitutional amendment requiring the Legislature to set aside cash during boom years.

The resolution is designed to provide more budget stability, preventing spending from increasing too much during years of high economic growth and providing a cash buffer when revenues are weak.

A small group of Democratic lawmakers opposed the resolution, saying it will leave people paying for taxes and getting nothing but a bigger savings account.

Long-term care workers will get more

Oympic Champ



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Rainier Beach High School student Mariah Scott smiles at the answer given by John Carlos, to a question she asked about the current media versus the media in 1968. John Carlos and his co-writer Dave Zirin spoke about their book “The John Carlos Story: The Sports Moment That Changed the World,” Thursday, Nov. 3, at the Northwest African American Museum. The event was co-presented by Elliott Bay Book Company and CD Forum for Arts and Ideas.

training and face stiffer background checks under another initiative approved by voters.

Voters previously approved similar rules in 2008, but lawmakers had delayed implementation because of budget cuts.

It’s not clear how the Legislature will pay for the initiative, which is projected to cost about \$18 million over the next two years.

Lawmakers are currently looking for \$2 billion in cuts, including further reductions in education funding at all levels.

The initiative includes 75 hours of paid training for long-term care workers, instead of the currently required 35 hours. All new workers would undergo federal background checks, instead of state background checks.

Workers

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one of the toughest yet. Typically, about 70 percent of the state’s farmworkers are in the country illegally. But many Mexican and other migrant workers stayed away this year after some states passed tougher immigration laws and the federal government cracked down.

“We’ve been dealing with this for a number of years now, and until something changes at the federal level, growers are going to struggle having enough workers,” said Mike Gempler, a farm labor contractor for Washington growers.

Gov. Chris Gregoire assembled a delegation of 15 farmers last month for a trip to Washington, D.C., where they urged Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform. At the time, Gregoire estimated the state still needed 4,000 workers to complete the harvest, which could have been the third-largest in state history.

“Our problem now is: How do we get it off the trees?” Gregoire said. “We don’t have a work force, and that is at the doorstep of the federal government.”

Farmers in other states also are struggling with a labor shortage. A Georgia pilot program matching probationers with farmers needing harvesters had mixed results. Some Alabama farmers tried hiring American citizens after the state’s new immigration law chased away migrant workers, but they said the new employees were often ready to call it a day by mid-afternoon. Many quit after a day or two.

In Washington, a state office that matches workers with available jobs posted hundreds of openings at orchards with few takers, and many farmers complained that those who did apply were too inexperi-

enced.

Some critics say growers would have enough workers if they paid more. Washington has the highest minimum wage in the country at \$8.67 per hour. Apple pickers are often paid based on how much they

A state office that matches workers with available jobs posted hundreds of openings at orchards with few takers

pick, but they’re guaranteed at least minimum wage.

Erik Nicholson, Pacific Northwest director for the United Farmworkers of America

labor union, said that’s not enough to attract a steady labor supply.

A growing number of farmers have turned to a federal guest-worker program to bring in foreign workers, despite longstanding complaints that it’s too cumbersome and expensive to be of any real help. Growers in the program generally must pay a higher wage, plus provide housing and transportation in and out of the country.

The Labor Department approved about 4,200 guest-workers for Washington this year - up from nearly 2,100 three years ago - but that’s far fewer than the thousands needed to work each year.

McDougall & Sons orchard, which has been family-owned for five generations, brought in 240 foreign workers under the program.

Occupy

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impression is that these are people who are thoughtful. They certainly don’t have all the answers. They make mistakes along the way. Does that mean they’re ineffective or pointless? I don’t think so.”

From San Diego to New Mexico, Occupy protests have also played host to academics volunteering their time to provide free classes. In Seattle, the teacher’s union for the city’s community colleges supports the protesters and quickly organized the lessons at Seattle Central Community College, where the local movement recently relocated.

For weeks, Occupy Seattle was unable to attract more than a handful of people to camp overnight at the downtown plaza where it began in early October. A combination of cold, rainy weather and a police-enforced ban on tents dwindled their num-

bers.

An internal debate over whether to move the occupation to City Hall after an offer from Mayor Mike McGinn also divided the group. It got to the point that even a writer

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at the liberal alternative newspaper “The Stranger” complained about Occupy Seattle.

“The problem with Seattle’s protesters is that they get caught up in fighting what is.

What they need to do right now is give an example of what can be,” writer Paul Constant posted, later adding, “make your camp a destination that people want to visit. Making this whole thing a battle over a pub-

lic space that nobody likes is embarrassing and it flies in the face of what the Occupy Wall Street protesters have created.”

Eventually, organizers decided to take the camp to the college, located in the middle of

a lively urban neighborhood, where the administration is tolerating their tent city for now. It has, in some ways, reinvigorated the protest. Medical, information, books and food tents are among the 50 or so that have moved onto the college campus.

Somewhere between 100 and 200 people are now camping overnight, organizers said.

Still, it remains to be seen whether this evolving protest will measure up to Seattle’s history of robust social movements.

In 1919, a general strike that began in the shipyards shut down the city, becoming one of the first successful city-wide work actions in the nation. During the Vietnam War years, University of Washington students would march down Interstate 5, halting traffic. One of the first chapters of the Black Panther party outside of California was established here in the late 1960s.