

Poll on tax plan shows voter volatility

By JIM REDDEN
Capital Bureau

A new poll on the corporate sales tax measure that will appear on the November ballot indicates that the proposal is not only controversial, but also volatile.

The latest poll shows the measure, known as Initiative Petition 28, being supported by 65 percent of Oregon voters. However, a survey by iCitizen, a non-partisan public involvement company, also shows that supporters aren't fixed in their viewpoint.

According to the poll of 555 registered voters, which was conducted online, the tax is opposed by 19 percent of respondents, with 16 percent undecided. More than half of the "no" voters characterize their opposition as strong.

'Very fluid issue'

The iCitizen poll is one of at least three recently released polls on the tax proposal, and its results differ markedly from previous surveys that showed weaker support for the measure.

A DHM Research poll done in May for Oregon Public Broadcasting and television station KPTV found 51 percent in favor, 32 percent opposed and 18 percent undecided.

A poll released in June by Salem's Action Solutions showed 41 percent would support IP28, with 23 percent opposed and 35 percent undecided.

The questions in the three polls were also different. For example, the Action Solutions poll asked voters to respond to a short version of the ballot title. DHM Research asked voters to respond to a longer version of the title.

Traditionally, support for ballot measures falls as campaigns get underway. The iCitizen poll found that IP28 support drops sharply (particularly among Republican voters) if respondents are offered an opposing argument.

"This is a very fluid issue," says Mark Keida, iCitizen's director of research. He said the language explaining the measure that will appear on the ballot is favorable to supporters. But, he noted, "Support disappears fast if an opposition argument is mentioned."

Rebecca Tweed, who is helping lead opposition to IP28 as campaign coordinator for Defeat the Tax on Oregon Sales, found the poll hard to believe.

"As the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office made clear in its IP28 analysis last month, the bulk of this \$6 billion tax on Oregon sales will be passed on to consumers through higher prices for groceries, medicine, electricity, gas, insurance, phone services — essentials people buy every day. The more Oregonians learn about IP28, the less they like it."

Asked to comment on the new poll, Katherine Driessen, press secretary for the IP28 campaign committee, said, "When you look across the country, Oregon is dead last in corporate taxes. Oregon voters know that if we are going to finally improve our badly underfunded schools and critical services, large, out-of-state corporations are going to have to start paying their fair share."

What is IP28?

The initiative has been certified for the November election but not yet been given the measure number that will appear on voters' ballots. It is sponsored by a coalition of labor, social justice and small business organizations called Our Oregon. It would impose a 2.5 percent tax on the sales of "C" corporations that exceed \$25 million a year, generating an estimated \$3 billion a year in additional tax revenue.

The measure is opposed by much of the business community, including the Portland Business Alliance and the Westside Economic Alliance. A report released in May by the Legislative Revenue Office found it would slow income, employment and population growth during the next five years. Among other things, the report said IP28 would be equivalent to a \$600 per person tax increase each year.

The Legislative Revenue Office also found that, although only about 1,000 corporations would pay the additional tax, they account for 88 percent of the corporate retail trade in Oregon. Utilities such as Portland General Electric and large grocery and department stores would be among the entities required to pay the tax.

The iCitizen poll showed support for IP28 is strongest among Democrats, men and young voters. Young voters are the least likely to return their ballots.

The company conducting the poll, iCitizen, was founded in 2012 as a social networking service focused on civic engagement. It envisioned a nonpartisan civic engagement app where people could find information, be heard and work together with their representatives to create an impact in their communities.

The company's vice president of state government relations is former Washington County Republican state Sen. Bruce Starr. (Starr is a co-sponsor of the proposed Wildlife Tracking Prevention Act.) Another Oregon connection is former state Rep. Derrick Kitts, who is iCitizen's vice president for government relations

Initiative Petition 49, which would restrict the Legislature's use of emergency clauses on legislation has support from 35 percent of voters polled, but even more (39 percent) are unsure. The iCitizen online poll of 555 registered Oregon voters was conducted between June 23 and 27. The data were weighed to U.S. Census benchmarks for gender, age, region, education, income, and race. The margin of error for the full sample was plus or minus 4 percent.

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Support for three more Pollsters also gauged support for three other ballot measures headed for the November ballot. Initiative Petition 68 would prohibit the sale in Oregon of products made from 12 types of exotic or endangered animals. Backers of the measure, known as the Wildlife Tracking Prevention Act, expect to submit more than enough signatures to place the measure on the ballot in the coming days.

Responses to the other two proposals were far less conclusive. The poll found that 50 percent of respondents oppose Senate Joint Resolution 4, a legislative referral to remove the mandatory retirement age for judges in the state, which is 75. Only 36 percent support it, while 15 percent are unsure. Interestingly, older voters were the most likely to support keeping the mandatory retirement age.

State officials did not immediately respond for comment. The decision Tuesday means environmentalists will have another chance to argue for a judicial review of the delisting decision, which they say was premature. They may also challenge the validity of House Bill 4040, the controversial new law that prompted the court to toss the case.

The bill was among the most controversial issues this year at the Legislature. It was crafted to block the lawsuit by upholding the delisting decision into state law and therefore render moot the request for judicial review, which environmentalists say could be unconstitutional.

Prosecutor: Spokane police officer justified in shooting man SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The Spokane County Prosecutor's Office says a Spokane police officer was justified in shooting a man who was pointing a BB gun at him at a motel.

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Authorities say Aaron Johnson had called 911 several times to say a roommate was threatening him with weapons.

Wolf delisting lawsuit against Oregon reinstated

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals has decided to reconsider a lawsuit against the state that was dismissed in April over its decision last year to remove the gray wolf from the endangered species list.

The decision Tuesday means environmentalists will have another chance to argue for a judicial review of the delisting decision, which they say was premature. They may also challenge the validity of House Bill 4040, the controversial new law that prompted the court to toss the case.

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Phillips and Officer Stephen Anderson went to Johnson's room and took cover in the hallway when confronted with the realistic-looking gun.

Prosecutors say Johnson followed into the hallway with the weapon in a shooting position. Phillips told Johnson to stop and get on the floor, and fired when Johnson continued approaching him.

Phillips shot Johnson multiple times. Johnson was treated at a Spokane hospital and jailed four days later on assault charges.

Group claims to have sabotaged lumber mill's logs

EUGENE (AP) — A lumber mill west of Eugene has been on high alert since learning that an environmental group may have put metal spikes inside some of its logs.

The Register-Guard reports that some environmentalists turned to such tactics during logging debates in the 1990s. They'd pound the spikes into live trees, making them potentially dangerous for loggers to cut down.

A group called SAP claimed on an Earth First! website that it placed spikes in logs at the Swanson Brothers mill on June 11.

Swanson Brothers president Larry Konnie says the mill operated as usual for two days before learning about SAP's claim. He says no one has found any spikes.

The editor of Earth First! Newswire says the people behind the website don't know who is involved with SAP.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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