

Poll: Majority oppose state tax on health care

By PARIS ACHEN Capital Bureau

SALEM — Most Oregonians oppose a proposed \$600 million tax on health insurance policy premiums to fund the state's Medicaid program, according to a survey by icitizen.

About 58 percent of 645 respondents surveyed online by the Nashville pollster said they oppose the tax, while 35 percent support it. Icitizen did not verify whether respondents were registered voters, only that they were Oregon resident.

Three Republican lawmakers want to refer parts of the law — which raises a variety of revenues to help the state pay for the Oregon Health Plan, the state's version of Medicaid.

"We have not done any polling so I have nothing to compare it to, but I would say it is consistent with feedback we have received from folks who signed the petition," said state Rep. Julie Parrish, R-West Linn, who spearheaded a petition for the referral.

Petitioners must gather nearly 59,000 signatures by Oct. 5 to place the referral on the ballot for a January special election.

'Connect the dots'

The survey asked respondents: "There is an effort to refer Oregon voters a new, nearly \$600 million tax on health insurance policy premiums. The money is intended to cover the costs of the Oregon Health Plan, the state's Medicaid program. Would you support this new tax on health insurance

premiums?" Parrish said the repeal represents only \$380 million out of the \$600 million tax. "We're not referring the entire thing," she said.

Petitioners, who include Parrish and Republican state Reps. Sal Esquivel of Medford and Cedric Hayden of Roseburg, want to repeal a 0.7 percent tax on hospitals and providers.

Other sections of the law they want to refer to voters are taxes on insurers, the Public Employees Benefits Board and coordinated care organizations, regional provider networks for Medicaid patients. They also want to stop a provision of the law that allows insurers to increase premiums by up to 1.5 percent to recover costs of the insurer assessment.

Patty Wentz, spokesperson for the Oregon Health Care Coalition, said the poll appears to be timed to achieve a political end.

"Let's connect some dots. You have a push poll with wildly inaccurate information released a few days before signature turn-in by a political operative who has been supported by the same extreme right-wing groups as the chief petitioner, such as the Oregon Firearms Federation," Wentz said. "This is a cynical political ploy with no relevance to reality, to the actual referendum, and what's at stake for the one million Oregonians who count on the Oregon Health Plan and the more than 210,000 people whose premiums will increase if the referendum doesn't pass. Oregonians who want accurate information should read the ballot title

and the fiscal impact estimate that were created through a bi-partisan public process and are posted online."

Split on support for DACA

Respondents, who were registered users of icitizen, filled out the online survey online between Sept. 13 and 28. The responses were weighted to U.S. Census benchmarks for gender, age, race, education, region and party identification in the state. The margin of error is 3.9 percent for the full sample of 645 respondents.

The survey also gauged Oregonians' views on other state policies.

A new law expanding coverage of reproductive health care, including abortion, to people of all incomes, U.S. citizenship status and gender identity garnered 49 percent support and 50 percent opposition.

Respondents also were almost evenly split over a new law to reduce criminal penalties for possession of heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine from a felony to a misdemeanor.

A majority of respondents, 54 percent, oppose sanctuary cities, which prohibit police from profiling immigrants and from assisting federal authorities in enforcing federal immigration law.

More than half of respondents, 51 percent, support ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The program allows undocumented youth brought to the country as children to legally work and attend school here.

— Pamplin Media/EO Media Group Capital Bureau reporter Claire Witycombe contributed to this story.

BRIEFLY

Confederate monuments near Vancouver to lose historic status

VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — County officials in Vancouver, Washington, have voted to remove highway markers honoring Confederate President Jefferson Davis from the Clark County Heritage Register.

The Columbian reports the Clark County Historic Preservation Commission voted on the delisting Tuesday night.

The commissioners said the marker, which was installed in Vancouver in 1939, failed meet established standards for a community heritage site.

Commissioner Alex Gall said the marker also lost its historic integrity when it was moved from its original spot to its current home on private property along Interstate 5 near Ridgefield.

The marker and a similar piece of granite originally installed in Blaine, near the Canadian border, now are part of Jefferson Davis Park which also includes Confederate flags.

The voting followed almost 90 minutes of public testimony, with comments in support and against the heritage register designation.

Judge won't release Iraq War veteran fighting deportation

SEATTLE (AP) — An immigration judge in Washington state declined to release an Iraq War veteran from custody Wednesday while he fights the government's efforts to deport him.

Chong Kim, a South Korean immigrant and green card holder from Portland, struggled

with drug addition, homelessness and post-traumatic stress following his time in Iraq in 2009 and 2010, leading to convictions for burglary and other charges.

Kim's lawyer and friends have said he has done well since completing a substance abuse treatment program run by the Department of Veterans Affairs early this year.

But immigration agents arrested him in April and brought him to a detention center in Tacoma, Washington. They plan to deport him because of his convictions.

"It's just wrong to be deporting an Army veteran," said Matt Luce, 41, of Troutdale, who attended high school with Kim and traveled with three other former classmates to the hearing. "Despite his convictions, he was on and continues to be on the right path. This is just a travesty of justice."

Man indicted for murder in death of man found at cliff base

PORTLAND (AP) — A grand jury has indicted a 22-year-old man in the death of another man who was found at the base of a northeast Portland cliff.

The Portland Police Bureau says a Multnomah County grand jury on Thursday indicted Avonte Armstead on one charge of murder.

Police say the body of Irving Batalla was found July 7, 2015. The Oregon State Medical Examiner performed an autopsy and determined Batalla died of blunt force injuries.

Police say an investigation found that Armstead killed Batalla.

Police say Armstead is being extradited from a jail in Carson City, Nevada, to Multnomah County Jail.

Audit: DHS should improve oversight of in-home care

By CLAIRE WITYCOMBE Capital Bureau

SALEM — Lack of oversight, data gaps, and overworked case managers could continue to put low-income Oregonians receiving in-home care at risk, state auditors said in a Wednesday report.

Auditors from the Oregon Secretary of State's Office said the Oregon Department of Human Services should take "immediate action" to improve in-home care for seniors and people with disabilities in a program serving about 13,000 people.

DHS offers several in-home care programs for seniors and people with disabilities. The program that auditors focused on is the Consumer-Employed Provider, or CEP, program.

About 13,230 people are enrolled in the CEP program, which allows low-income seniors and people with disabilities to choose their own home-care workers.

The program is for people who qualify for Medicaid, which is paid for

both by the state and the federal government.

When a person is enrolled in the CEP program, he or she has two main people on their team: a case manager from DHS who handles administrative functions like evaluating the person's needs, and a homecare worker who does the day-to-day work of in-home care, such as preparing meals and administering medications.

A key part of the CEP program is that the people receiving in-home care are also employers: they hire, train and dismiss their own in-home care workers.

But an information vacuum puts the agency at risk of missing when people in the CEP program need more help, according to the audit.

State and federal rules stipulate that case managers monitor CEP program participants, but auditors found that a third of patients they surveyed for the audit didn't get all of the required check-ins from a case manager in 2016.

Two-thirds never received an in-person visit, other than an annual assessment. Home visits by case

managers are not required, but can help case managers — and the state — keep closer tabs on whether in-home care recipients are getting what they need.

The agency is required to conduct a risk assessment when it initiates a service plan for an in-home care recipient, but auditors found cases where case managers didn't do an initial risk assessment.

Patients found to be higher-risk require more contacts from case managers.

Auditors said that in the cases they reviewed, "insufficient documentation" prevented them from determining whether high-risk patients got the additional required contact with case managers.

The data that the agency does collect focuses more on case manager performance than on the welfare of people receiving services, auditors said.

"There is no aspect of the quality assurance process or consumer monitoring or assessment reports that looks at consumers' well-being," the auditors wrote.

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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WINDS and UV INDEX TODAY. Wind speeds for Boardman, Pendleton. UV index scale from 1 to 6 with corresponding sun icons and protection advice.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY. Map of the US showing weather systems and precipitation. National Summary: Drenching rain and storms are forecast from part of the Midwest to the southern Rockies. Yesterday's National Extremes: High 101° in Tucson, Ariz. Low 2° in Bodie State Park, Calif.

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