

Tax: Proceeds would pay for health insurance for low-income residents

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coveted and protected by cigarette companies that spend thousands in political donations in Oregon and millions to defeat policies they find unfavorable.

Brown has conceded she won't get the three-fifths of votes in the House and Senate needed to pass a tax. But she believes she can get legislators to refer the tax to the ballot, where she thinks it will pass.

Tobacco taxes are historically challenging to pass in Oregon. In 2007, voters turned down an 84.5-cent tobacco tax increase. The proposal didn't get the required majority in the Legislature, and instead was referred to the ballot. That measure would have amended the Constitution and dedicated new tax money toward health care for low-income children.

Last year, Deborah Kafoury, Multnomah County commissioner, and the Oregon Nurses Association tried to get a \$2 statewide increase on the state ballot, but the petitioners couldn't muster the needed signatures to force a public vote. The Oregon Nurses Association at the time found tobacco companies had spent \$16 million in the past decade to influ-

ence Oregon policy.

Oregon ranks 32nd in the country in the cost of the tobacco tax. Washington's tax is more than \$3 per pack.

The largest concentration of low tobacco tax rates is found in the southeast, where most states charge a tax of less than a dollar per pack.

In Oregon, Republicans have opposed tobacco taxes, but Democrats now have the three-fifths majorities in Salem so they could pass an increase without Republican legislators.

Still, it's no certainty. "There is a better awareness on the impacts of tobacco on health care costs," Brown said last week when asked about the proposal.

Brown's proposal — House Bill 2270 — was moved on to the House Committee on Revenue during a work session Tuesday. It was not discussed.

And while those pushing the tax increase are quick to say it's an uphill battle, there hasn't been much of a fight so far this session. The House and Senate Republican caucuses said haven't taken a formal position on the tobacco tax increase.

One knock on a tobacco tax is that it's regressive, meaning it disproportionately hits low-income

people. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that people without a college education and who are below the federal poverty level are more likely to smoke.

State Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Portland, sees it more as a Pigouvian tax, meant to correct an undesirable outcome of a product, such as health care costs associated with things such as tobacco, alcohol or sugar.

Christopher Friend, a lobbyist for the American Cancer Society, said a tobacco tax hits certain populations harder because Big Tobacco targets low-income, minority and LGBT communities.

"We see it as a policy that actually helps these communities," Friend said. "We know 60 to 70 percent of current smokers want to quit, and a significant tobacco tax is a really good encouragement to quit."

Steiner Hayward, a doctor, staunchly supports the proposal.

"It's appropriate to use tobacco taxes to pay for Medicaid because our Medicaid expenses wouldn't be so high if people didn't smoke," she said. "It seems like a logical thing to do."

Altria, one of the largest tobacco companies in the world and parent company to Philip

Morris, regularly provides donations of about \$1,000 to Oregon politicians' campaigns. It mostly donates to Republicans, but also gave to Democrats. In 2017, it gave \$33,500 to Promote Oregon Leadership, the House Republican campaign arm. In 2018 it gave the PAC \$8,000.

Lobbyists for Altria didn't return a request for comment.

State Rep. Cedric Hayden, R-Roseburg, has supported a tobacco tax before. He is open to increasing the tobacco tax but said the state should change where current tobacco dollars go.

Hayden agreed that a large portion of the revenue should go to health care, but argued that the tax itself won't stop people from smoking.

He said 5 or 10 percent of the dollars should go education programs, such as anti-smoking signs in stores. Right now, he said, about 1.5 percent of tobacco tax revenue goes to such campaigns. Thirty-nine percent goes into the general fund, which Hayden dislikes.

"Take the existing tax that comes from that source, and put it in health care," Hayden said. "And then, show to me that your intent is to actually get people healthier."

Hayden said before he would consider a tobacco tax hike, he

wants to see current cigarette taxes dedicated to funding mental health crisis centers around the state. To that end, he has introduced House Bill 2831.

Hayden, like Brown, said he doesn't think the tax increase would get through the Legislature. If it were to be referred to the ballot, Friend said he expects Big Tobacco to spend up to \$40 million on a campaign against it.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said the tobacco tax is among the most uncertain of Medicaid funding sources. She said lawmakers haven't spent much time on it, and it's not clear how much of a push there will be for the tax later in the session.

For Rep. Mitch Greenlick, D-Portland, combatting smoking is a passion. Greenlick was the director of the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research where he developed anti-smoking packaging.

He said tying the tax to a Constitutional amendment in 2007 hurt the proposed tax's chances. He said many lawmakers want the money that would come from the tax, so that gives it a decent shot.

"I think it's feasible, I don't think it's necessarily probable," he said. "I am more optimistic about it now than I've ever been."

Denton: Her dedication to fitness is inspiring to others

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"Aaaaannd switch," Smith directed the 18 exercisers in her class.

The petite Denton scooted over to a lower back machine and got settled, selecting the level of resistance with two adjustment buttons. Looking flashy in a turquoise top, black capri workout pants and black-and-pink Nikes, she began pumping her body forward and back.

Bonnie Douglas, pedaling a stationary bike nearby, spoke of snow in the forecast and inclined her head at Denton.

"It won't deter her," Douglas said. "She'll be back this afternoon."

When it's icy or snowy, Denton takes a taxi, said front desk attendant Keegan Mishler.

"She calls to check and make sure de-icer has been spread," Mishler said.

One icy day, he tried to talk her into staying home. A couple of hours later, Denton walked in the front door and smiled at him.

She says she has always been active. As a child, she climbed tall fir trees near her home in The Dalles and played school sports.

"In grade school, they didn't have enough boys, so I played football," she said. "In high school, I took every sport. I was never still."

She hasn't changed. "As long as I'm in motion, I'm happy," she said.

During her years with husband, Bob, now deceased, she regularly ran six miles as he rode along on his bike. The couple and



Contributed photo

Valva Denton celebrates her 100th birthday on Oct. 9, 2017, at the Roundup Athletic Club.

their two children spent plenty of time outdoors, camping, hiking and fishing. She and Bob regularly biked from Pendleton to Adams and back.

Denton, who has an assortment of grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, retired from her communications job at the Eastern Oregon State Hospital 36 years ago at age 65.

Several years ago, a broken bone threatened her active lifestyle. As Denton stepped out of her apartment, she lost her balance and found herself on the ground with an injured elbow. When she called for help, no one heard, so she gathered up her dangling arm and went back inside. She dis-

missed the idea of an ambulance and called a transportation service instead. As she waited for the car, she raked the warm clothes from the dryer into a laundry basket because it needed to be done.

"Now, I'm ready to go," she thought at the time.

During the days following her surgery, Denton insists she experienced absolutely no pain, something she attributes to God and the fact that "every church in town was praying for me."

For a long time, Denton told no one at the athletic club her age. "When people asked, I said, 'Put whatever age you like on me. When I get to be 100, you can throw me a party.'"

"She said she thought people would look at her like a number rather than a person," said Smith. "She held her ground."

Denton promised Smith she'd tell when she was about to turn 100 so Smith could make party preparations. In October of 2017, invitations went out. Circuit class members prepared food.

On Oct. 9, the RAC lobby morphed into party central for Denton's 100th birthday bash. The guest of honor wore a bright red shirt that said "Team 100." She posed for photos with Smith's granddaughter, who has the same birthday. The toddler wore a shirt that said "Team One."

Club members, plus friends and family from all over, attended the party. Denton weathered the fuss with good cheer. She insisted on no presents except for donations to the Salvation Army, which totaled several hundred dollars.

Smith said people do double-takes when they learn Denton's age.

"People don't realize how much older she really is because she's so sharp," Smith said. "She doesn't take meds, she still drives her car ... everyone thinks she walks on water."

Denton deflects such praise with a wave of her hand.

"I'm with young people all the time. They tell me I'm amazing," she said. "I tell them I'm not amazing, God's amazing."

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Trump introduces World Bank critic Malpass to lead it

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday introduced David Malpass, a Treasury official he has nominated to lead the World Bank, as the "right person to take on this incredibly important job."

Malpass, who is now Trump's undersecretary for international affairs at the Treasury Department, has been a critic of the 189-nation World Bank. He has argued that the bank, a lending institution with a focus on emerging countries, has concerned itself too much with its own expansion and not enough with its core missions, like fighting poverty. Malpass would succeed

Jim Yong Kim, who left in January three years before his term was to end.

Malpass, 62, made clear Wednesday that his focus at the World Bank would include furthering Trump's agendas for developing countries.

One major initiative, he said, would be to implement changes to the World Bank that he and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin helped negotiate. And in a nod to the president's daughter and adviser, Ivanka Trump, Malpass said he would focus on improving the status of women.

"A key goal will be to ensure that women achieve full participation in developing economies," Malpass said.

Chief: He'd like to stay on

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recommended Pendleton hire Berardi in an interim capacity after it determined that late 2018 was not the right time to hire a permanent chief due to several vacancies at other departments.

Pendleton hasn't had a permanent fire chief since April, when former Fire Chief Mike Ciraulo abruptly retired.

Corbett and Ciraulo declined to comment on

the circumstances behind Ciraulo's departure. But performance evaluations revealed conflict between Ciraulo and Police Chief Stuart Roberts, who supervises the fire chief position as public safety director.

Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Penninger filled in as chief before Berardi's hire.

When the city does fill the fire chief role permanently, the new hire will earn between \$86,676-\$115,764.

Waste: Amount collected exceeded expectations

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and the county sent flyers to churches, doctor's offices and pharmacies.

Arne's Sewer & Septic of Pendleton provided portable toilets and hand wash stations, and the Pendleton Country Club provided golf carts for workers to zip from one end of the event to the other.

Miller said traditional local media partners played a significant role promoting the event, but other media also helped.

"One of our most effective advertising platforms

this year was embracing media, social media," Miller said.

The effort also received a \$1,000 Wildhorse Foundation Rapid Response Grant. Miller said that money paid for 1,000 refrigerator magnets to promote the collection at farmers markets and the county fair.

The county also used the money to buy bright green T-shirts for volunteers, including local FFA youth, who directed traffic at the event. Those T-shirts helped volunteers stick out for safety.

And Pendleton police

dedicated an officer to ensure the security of certain medications, such as painkillers.

The locals bringing in the waste never had to leave their vehicles, she said, because Clean Harbors did that work. Clean Harbors also had chemists on site to test questionable material for proper disposal.

County commissioners John Shafer and Bill Elfering said the 12 tons of waste was impressive. Eric Clanton with the DEQ in Pendleton agreed. He is a natural resource specialist and the agency's liaison to Umatilla

County. "Pretty much rest assured," he told the board, "going on from here we're going to use the model she put together," he said.

Miller also told the board there will not be a waste collection in 2019. She said holding one every other year works better.

Clanton after the meeting said he is proposing the DEQ have Miller talk to other communities throughout the state on her model for holding waste collections. Miller created the plan, he said, and should be the one who teaches it.

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