

Poll: Support for Measure 97 erodes when voters hear pros/cons

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

An overwhelming majority of Oregon voters support a corporate sales tax measure on the November ballot, according to a new poll by icitizen, a nonpartisan survey firm.

It's the second poll in less than a week to show Measure 97 with a big lead, but the icitizen survey included several follow-up questions, which indicate that voters' opinions change when they learn more about arguments for how the gross receipts tax would work.

"This suggests messaging about the effect on an Oregonian's pocketbook can make for a tighter race in November, depending on either camp's ability to market the measure in their favor," said icitizen polling analyst Cynthia Villacis.

The measure, backed by a coalition of public employee unions, would levy a 2.5-percent tax on certain corporations' Oregon annual sales exceeding \$25 million.

The poll, taken from Sept. 2-7, found that 59 percent of 610 respondents favor the tax and 21 percent oppose it. After voters heard arguments against the measure, that support dwindled to 40 percent while opposition spiked to 31 percent. The poll has a 4-percent margin of error.

For instance, 65 percent of respondents said they would be less likely to support the measure if they had to pay \$600 per year in the form of higher prices and lost job growth resulting from the tax. That figure is based on a May estimate by the nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office.

Similarly, 59 percent of

respondents were more likely to vote for the measure if the revenue were to fill a \$2 billion annual gap in funding needed for quality education in the state. That figure comes from the nonpartisan Quality Education Commission.

When asked how the money should be spent, the most common response — from nearly a quarter of those polled — was education spending.

The icitizen poll mirrors another independent survey, this one by DHM Research taken from Sept. 1-6, which found 60 percent of respondents support Measure 97, while 30 percent oppose it.

"At 60 percent (support) in back-to-back polls, Oregonians are clear they want corporations to pay their fair share," said Katherine Driesen, a spokeswoman for Our Oregon, the nonprofit advocacy group backing the measure. "When we share with voters that large and out-of-state corporations pay little or no taxes, they're eager to hold them accountable. They support 97 because Oregon voters know great schools and quality care for our seniors makes Oregon strong."

So far, the campaigns for and against the measure have played out mostly on social media and in front of editorial boards and civic groups.

"Generally speaking, the numbers in the polls we're seeing is consistent with polling we've seen since last fall," said Pat McCormick, a spokesman for the Defeat the Tax on Oregon Sales. "The numbers haven't changed much because there hasn't been much robust campaign dialogue."

McCormick said campaigning usually heats up

after Labor Day. The opposition campaign plans to debut its first television ad sometime this month, he said.

The debate between the campaigns centers largely on who will pay for the tax. Opponents contend that consumers will pay for the majority of the cost of the tax, while supporters argue that many of the large corporations affected by the tax will absorb most of the extra cost into their national pricing scheme.

The icitizen poll also tested voters' position on several other measures on the November ballot.

- Measure 94 removes the mandatory retirement of judges at age 75: 53 percent oppose, 33 percent favor, 14 percent undecided.

- Measure 95 allows public universities to invest in equities: 29 percent favor, 24 percent oppose, 47 percent undecided.

- Measure 96 devotes 1.5 percent of state lottery revenue to fund veteran services: 83 percent favor, 8 percent oppose, 9 percent undecided.

- Measure 98 devotes a portion of new state revenue to fund dropout prevention and career and college readiness programs in Oregon high schools: 64 percent favor, 19 percent oppose, 17 percent undecided.

- Measure 99 designates \$22 million in state lottery revenue for outdoor education for all fifth- and sixth-graders in Oregon: 69 percent favor, 19 percent oppose, 12 percent undecided.

- Measure 100 prohibits the sale of products and parts of 12 types of endangered animals: 85 percent favor, 7 percent oppose, 8 percent undecided.

Oregon conservation easement program will seek \$4.25 million

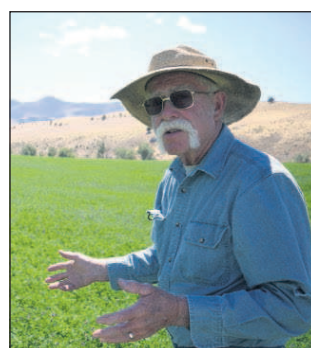
By Mateusz Perkowski
Capital Bureau

Oregon legislators will likely be asked for \$4.25 million next year to pay for conservation easements that would protect farmland from development.

Plans are beginning to solidify for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, which would provide grants to farmers interested in easements and succession planning, said Meta Loftsgaarden, executive director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

OWEB, which will oversee the program, plans to hold "listening sessions" this autumn based on concepts developed by agricultural and conservation groups before drafting proposed legislation for the 2017 legislative session, she said.

"We didn't want to go out to farmers and ranchers with a blank slate. We really wanted to have something they could react to," Loftsgaarden said during the Sept. 12 Or-



The Eagle/Sean Hart

Roger Ediger, a rancher in Mt. Vernon, has decided to place a conservation easement on the land that will preserve its current condition in perpetuity.

egon Board of Agriculture meeting in Pendleton, Ore.

Conservation easements are usually sold or donated by farmers who give up their development rights in exchange for tax benefits and lower property values, reducing inheritance taxes.

They haven't been as commonly used in Oregon as in

other states because of the statewide land use planning system, but this system alone isn't enough to prevent the fragmentation of working lands, Loftsgaarden said.

The \$4.25 million wouldn't be enough funding for everyone who wanted to sell an easement, but it would serve as a pilot program — particularly for lands inhabited by threatened or endangered species, or that are subject to "urban growth boundary" expansion, said Doug Krahmer, a blueberry farmer who sits on a work group advising the program.

The easements will have a conservation component and could be used to provide properties with regulatory protections, offering an additional incentive for farmers, Loftsgaarden said.

Currently, a similar approach is used for forestlands where owners want to grow trees older than 30 years but are afraid of creating habitat for the northern spotted owl, hindering future timber harvest, she said.

Poll: Dems outpace GOP in state races

By Claire Withycombe
Capital Bureau

Democratic candidates running statewide in Oregon are leading by varying margins, according to results of a new poll released Tuesday.

Gov. Kate Brown was the choice of 44 percent of those surveyed, outpacing Republican candidate William "Bud" Pierce by 17 percentage points, according to the poll conducted by icitizen, a Tennessee company. Twenty-three percent of voters were undecided on their choice for governor.

Brown's lead over Pierce mirrors the advantage Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton has over Republican Donald Trump in Oregon. The icitizen poll puts her ahead, 43 percent to 28 percent. Libertarian Gary Johnson was



Pamplin Media Group

Secretary of State candidate Brad Avakian responds to a question as GOP candidate Dennis Richardson listens. A recent poll shows Avakian has a 3-point lead over Richardson, with 45 percent of voters either undecided or backing another candidate.

favored by 11 percent of the respondents, while Green Party candidate Jill Stein drew 3 percent.

According to the poll, the contest for the Oregon secretary of state is much tighter.

The Democratic candidate, Brad Avakian, leads his rival, former state representative and gubernatorial candidate Dennis Richardson, by just 3 percentage points.

Avakian, the labor commissioner, took in 29 percent, while Richardson garnered 26 percent of vote in the survey. Thirty-six percent were undecided, and 9 percent favored a minor party candidate.

Brad Pyle, Avakian's campaign manager, said Richardson's views on abortion rights and immigration are at odds with those of most Oregonians.

"The election will not be held until voters have had time to see that Dennis Richardson represents the Trump wing of the Republican Party," Pyle wrote in an email response to the poll results.

The icitizen poll, conducted online from Sept. 2-7, asked 610 Oregon voters who they would vote for if the election were held today. It has a margin of error of 4 points. Many polled remained undecided about their choice for secretary of state, as did many who were polled about the treasurer's race.

Just under half — 48 percent — of voters surveyed said they were undecided in the contest for treasurer.

Democratic candidate Tobias Read, a state representative from Washington County, received 25 percent of votes. Republican Jeff Gudman, a Lake Oswego city councilor, took 18 percent. The third candidate, Chris Telfer, an Independent Party candidate from Bend, was the choice of 9 percent surveyed.

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