

Salem Scene

BY Jack Zimmerman

Anyone who figures Oregonians won't turn out to vote during this fall's General Election may be in for a surprise.

Despite statistics indicating declining voter activity in recent elections, more than a few observers look for the trend to be reversed on Nov. 7. And their reasons include such diverse subjects as abortion, capital punishment, property taxes, utility bills, land use planning, license plates and false teeth.

That's right. Oregon voters this November will be presented with a ballot box opportunity to influence a variety of issues ranging literally from the cradle to the grave—with particular emphasis perhaps on those two proverbial human certainties, death and taxes.

In addition to the every-other-year opportunity to elect a variety of state officials, delegates to Congress and State Legislators, voters will find a total of 10 statewide measures on their ballots. Two were placed there by the Legislature during the 1977 regular session, one was a legislative act referred by petition signers and the remaining seven achieved ballot status by garnering sufficient signatures of registered voters on initiative petitions.

With eight of the ten measures winning spots on the ballot by virtue of petition campaigns, one would suspect those issues face the ballot test with built-in voter interest. And one, Ballot Measure no. 6 that would limit property taxes in a manner similar to California's Proposition 13, attracted more than 200,000 petition signers—three times the number required and perhaps nearly one-fourth of all ballots that will be cast for measures in the upcoming election.

But while the property tax limitation measure has attracted the most public attention—and still must survive at least one legal challenge—the remaining seven that made the ballot via the petition route seem likely to generate additional voter appeal as election time nears.

Ballot Measure 1 and 2—referred by lawmakers—deal with the system used to elect appellate judges and legislative affirmation of Executive appointments, respectively. They are issues that generated lots of interest among lawmakers during the 1977 session but are not sexy enough to overly excite your run-of-the-mill voter.

Measure No. 3—referred by petition—would double motor vehicle license and registration fees. A considerable number of voters upset by rising gasoline prices likely will hop in their cars and drive to their polling places to have a say on this one.

Measure No. 4 is designed to make it easier to form People's Utility Districts. It and Measure No. 9—that would limit utility rate bases by eliminating costs of generating facilities until they are in use—will also attract voters concerned about utility bills.

Measure No 5 would permit denturists to fit false teeth in healthy mouths. Probably the hottest issue for senior citizens during the last legislative session, this one is guaranteed to boost the turnout of both dentists and their older patients.

Measure No. 7 would reinstate the death penalty for persons convicted of certain types of murder. Given the temper of the times and public outrage in response to bloody escapades by two convicted felons recently, this one is bound to swell the total vote count.

Measure No. 8 would prohibit the state from paying for abortions. It alone is enough to attract a sizeable number of otherwise complacent voters.

And Measure No. 10—designed to return goal-making authority for land use planning to the Legislature—is expected to generate votes

among those concerned with the long-controversial Land Conservation and Development Commission.

By themselves, each measure would attract a certain amount of interest. Together, they could create a turnout that would indeed reverse the alarming trend toward voter apathy.

Sec. of State Norma Paulus, Oregon's chief elections official, notes the May 1977 special election that defeated the so-called Safety Net plan for school finance only drew 27.7 per cent of the state's voters. A November special election the same year dealing with water development loan funds and development of non-nuclear energy sources only attracted 18.5 per cent.

This year's Primary Election had a 42 per cent turnout,

lowest in three decades. And Mrs. Paulus is quick to report local elections in which outcomes were determined by absentee voters and a school budget ballot that drew only two votes. She notes one recent special district election at which no voters showed and the issue was decided by a bloc of absentees all voting the same way.

Just what motivates voters to exercise their right to influence those who govern

them has long perplexed social scientists. That perplexity will increase if there's a small turnout at Oregon polls in November.

But at this stage of the game, the smart money just has to be influencing odds favoring a demonstration sustaining faith in participatory government at the ballot box.

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Lexington news

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Mr. and Mrs. Joe Yocom have received word from their son Jack that he is now stationed at Fort Leonardwood, Mo., where he is receiving his basic training with the U.S. Army. Jack is a 1978 graduate of Heppner High School.

The triple-wide trailer home of Mr. and Mrs Charles Buchanan has arrived in Lexington and construction work is being done at their lot on the Lexington-Buttercreek Highway near the airport. Guests of Mr. and Mrs. Pete

Klinger this week have been their grandsons, Mike and Mark Klinger of Beaverton.

Vernon Munkers is here from his home in Salem, helping with the harvesting operations at the Leonard Munkers ranch.

Frank B. Robinson is home from Pioneer Memorial Hospital.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Robinson, Mrs. Frank B. Robinson and family and Mr. and Mrs. Marion Way and family spent three days in The Dalles attending the Little League baseball tournament.

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