

## The INDEPENDENT

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### Opinion

## Ballot Measures varied in Nov. 5 General Election

Ballot Measures 14 through 18 were "referred" to the voter by the state legislature, they are called referendums (properly "referenda," but who is proper?)

**Measure 14** is a "housekeeping" amendment that would clean up the state constitution by tossing out now obsolete, historical racial references. There was no opposition.

**Measures 15 and 16** would amend the constitution to allow issuing general obligation bonds for seismic safety evaluation and retrofitting of public education buildings and public safety buildings. It provides for repayment from varied sources, including general fund and lottery proceeds, but prohibits using property taxes for that purpose. Again, there was no opposition.

**Measure 17** would amend the constitution to reduce the minimum age required to serve in the state legislature from 21 to 18. This would not guarantee anything, but would allow people who are old enough to vote, to also seek election to the state legislature. The measure has broad bipartisan support and little opposition.

**Measure 18** restores a local option that allows voters to form a split-rate taxing district. Measure 50, approved in 1995, grandfathered in all existing split-rate taxing districts, but eliminated local option for the formation of new districts. This will not increase property taxes unless voters approve a new district.

*The INDEPENDENT* recommends approval of Measures 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

Ballot Measures 21 through 27 are "initiatives," meaning they were placed on the ballot by obtaining the statutorily required number of valid signatures on initiative petitions. (There are no measures 19 and 20.)

**Measure 21** is another effort at obfuscation by Don McIntire, who yelled "taxes are too high" and delivered only loss of local control over school funding (with Measure 5 about 1990). This constitutional amendment, which would allow voters to vote "for" None of the Above, is equally simplistic in approach, and would deliberately create vacancies in judicial positions. This not only wouldn't eliminate potentially inadequate judges, but could seriously affect defendants' right to trial. It's true that most people don't plan on becoming defendants, but it's also true that charges are dismissed against many defendants when their right to a timely trial is violated. No trial is an absolute guarantee of no justice.

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### Opinion-Measures, continued

**Measure 22** would require judges of the state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals to be elected by districts, instead of statewide. Proponents' arguments that judges need residency requirements in a restricted population area just don't make sense. The argument by chief petitioner Steve Doell that "most of the opposition for this measure comes from trial lawyers in the Willamette Valley" is equally nonsensical. Even a quick look reveals opponents who have never been, and never will be trial lawyers, among them are Mark O. Hatfield, Vic Atiyeh, Barbara Roberts and John A. Kitzhaber. It also reveals a list of District Attorneys who are supporters and trial lawyers. The list of DAs raises a question, too: Would it be easier for them to be elected to the court if they didn't have to run outside of their district? Oregon needs judges who are the most qualified; where they live in Oregon has no bearing.

These measures are a deliberate effort to turn judgeships into political battlegrounds. That's no way to run a court. We recommend a No vote on Measures 21 and 22.

**Measure 23** would create a statewide healthcare finance plan using income and payroll taxes. There are good elements in

the plan: All residents would be covered regardless of income or existing conditions, including those who don't have, and can't afford, health care, and reimbursement would be required for procedures covered by insurance or other programs. At this time, this plan won't be approved, nevertheless, some of the opponents' tactics should be aired. For instance, most voters received a letter purportedly from a "Registered Nurse" who is "Director of Health Services, Long-Term Care Facility," but did you notice there was no personal address, the name of the "facility" was not included, the postage was at the presorted rate and there was a bar code on the envelope? Did you wonder how such a person could afford to send this letter to registered voters all over the state? Did you wonder why it had a return address in a commercial zone? If none of these questions arose in your mind, look more closely at the next unsolicited campaign material you receive.

It won't pass, but we recommend a Yes vote on Measure 23. It is time to look at alternative health care financing.

Space did not allow thorough coverage of the candidates for office. We recommend using the voters pamphlet, not TV.