

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Oregon dreamers, wake up to avoid budget nightmare

Oregon loves dreamers, according to its new slogan, but achieving a balanced budget has required a tough, wide-awake and realistic balancing act for the past two years. With a depressed economy, the state's unbalanced reliance on income taxes has resulted in two years of very difficult decisions by the state legislature.

The state education budget is in trouble at all levels. Many school districts have eliminated music, art and drama; others have reduced languages, science, history, English and mathematics to minimum requirements. Federal and state mandates that are only partially funded have made the situation worse. Tuition for higher education has increased to a level that makes college impossible for many Oregonians.

The public safety budget is in trouble at all levels. With more than four million people, there are now only 329 state troopers to cover all of our highways. We have closed jails and juvenile centers. County jails must house prisoners who used to be sentenced to state prisons.

Social services are in trouble at all levels. Thousands of people have been dropped from Senior and Disabled Services and the Oregon Health Plan. For this "cost-efficiency," those who have health insurance will pay higher premiums to provide emergency care for those without health insurance.

The number of state employees has been greatly reduced. Major changes have been made to the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), reducing pension costs for state and local governments. Many regulatory boards have been eliminated; others were consolidated. Reserve funds have been emptied; money has been borrowed.

There is no cushion left, no safety net exists.

The legislature worked long and hard to reach a bipartisan solution.

The nightmare of Measure 30 will begin if it fails, with \$544.6 million that will have to be cut from the already inadequate budgets of Education, Public Safety and Health and Human Services, but the results will be even worse. The loss of state programs will result in Oregon losing about \$200 million more in federal assistance.

These reductions will hurt people and cripple Oregon. Vote YES on Measure 30 – for Oregon!

The little known "MAD PEOPLE" DISEASE STRIKES ANOTHER FAST FOOD JOINT!



Measure 30 asks little of most Oregonians

By Jeff Thompson, Michael Leachman, and Charles Sheketoff — Oregon Center on Public Policy

In February, Oregonians will vote on a revenue package adopted by the 2003 Legislative Assembly in an effort to balance the budget and avoid deeper budget cuts in vital programs. If Measure 30 fails, education, public safety, and human services programs will be cut by \$790 million in the current state budget.

Cuts of this magnitude will impact all Oregonians, while the increased taxes under Measure 30 are small for most taxpayers.

OCCP's analysis shows that:

- Middle-income households will pay \$81 in net additional taxes under Measure 30 in 2003, or less than \$7 per month.
- Low-income households will pay just \$14 in net additional taxes.
- The richest one percent of Oregonians will pay \$4,084 in net additional Measure 30 taxes.

Several large federal income tax cuts in recent years ensure that most Oregonians will be paying less in federal taxes.

For all Oregonians, the decrease in federal taxes is considerably larger than the small increases under Measure 30:

- Middle-income Oregonians will get an \$844 federal tax cut in 2003.
- Low-income Oregonians will get a \$106 federal tax cut in 2003.
- The richest one-percent of Oregonians will benefit from a \$36,500 federal tax cut in 2003.

Similar to most other taxpayers, most Oregon seniors will pay little under Measure 30, and wealthy seniors will pay more than middle- and low-income seniors.

- Low-income seniors, incomes under \$15,000, will pay an additional \$8.
- Seniors with incomes between \$30,000 and \$50,000 will pay \$67.
- High-income seniors, those with incomes with \$100,000 or more (averaging \$280,000), will pay an additional \$1,373.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy is a Silverton, Oregon-based non-profit research institute that uses research and analysis to advance policies and practices that improve the economic and social prospects of low- and moderate- income Oregonians, the majority of Oregonians.