

Measure 54: *Deletes unenforceable constitutional language*
Vote YES

Measure 55: *Minor redistricting change*
No Position

Measure 56: *Eliminates double majority requirement*
Vote YES

Measure 57: *Increases sentences for specified crimes*
Vote NO

Measure 58: *Limits bilingual education*
Vote NO

Measure 59: *Tax break for high-income taxpayers*
Vote NO

Measure 60: *Teacher evaluation based on "performance"*
Vote NO

Measure 61: *Mandatory minimum prison sentences*
Vote NO

Measure 62: *Dedicates lottery funds to law enforcement*
Vote NO

Measure 63: *Eliminates specified building permit requirements*
Vote NO

Measure 64: *Cuts political funds for public employee unions*
Vote NO

Measure 65: *Creates open primary elections*
No Position

Why offer a voter's ballot measure guide?

This voters' guide to ballot measures for the Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2008, statewide general election in Oregon is provided as an educational resource by the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) Board of Directors and Public Policy Committee. EMO is a statewide, ecumenical association working to respond to the needs of Oregonians.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's position statements reflect a vote of its board of directors based on the recommendations of its Public Policy Advocacy Committee.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon has adopted a "Statement of Social Principles," which guides our public policy advocacy

work. In this statement, we affirm the value of involvement with civic affairs and the governmental process:

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon believes that the demands of the Gospel and our understanding of our diverse religious traditions call us to participate in civic life. Our faith traditions give us a unique and important perspective to offer the community in deliberations on civic, legislative and governmental matters. EMO believes that every person should be given the opportunity to be informed about the policies and processes of government at every level.

As we consider each ballot measure, we keep in mind this statement of principles and seek to make recommendations that are consistent with our past positions and our biblical and theological core principles. We ask that you prayerfully consider the wisdom of your own tradition and process of discernment in exercising your civic duty.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland and the Greek Orthodox Church abstained from EMO's deliberations regarding the November ballot measures. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese releases all public policy statements through the Oregon Catholic Conference.

A message from the EMO president & executive director

It is with great pleasure, but also some sense of concern, that Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) presents the *2008 Voters' Guide to Oregon Ballot Measures*. We feel this sense of concern, because there are several ballot measures that threaten Oregon's fiscal health and are likely to diminish the resources that are available to provide education, health care and human services for those Oregonians who we are called to lift up in their hour of need.

We hope our discussion of all of the ballot measures will provide valuable insights for Oregon's voters, especially for people whose faith is their ultimate guide. This election, like all elections, is important for people of faith, and for all Oregonians. This election occurs in the context of a continuing war in Iraq and a deepening recession in the United States and in Oregon. State and local governments in Oregon face growing fiscal troubles, due both to the economic downturn, but also due to the cut-off of federal timber payments to many Oregon counties.

In that context, several of the proposed ballot measures seem likely to add to our growing fiscal troubles. Measure 61, which establishes mandatory minimum sentences for property crimes such as burglary and theft, threatens to dramatically expand the number of prison inmates in Oregon—at great cost to Oregon taxpayers. Measure 57, which strengthens sentences for a more limited range of more serious crimes, also threatens to increase prison populations, though not nearly as severely as does Measure 61.

Somewhat surprisingly, Measure 58, which requires new English immersion programs while it limits bilingual education in Oregon public schools to no more than two years, turns out to be extremely costly. The Legislative Revenue Office has indicated that the increased costs due to this measure alone are likely to be at least \$406 million dollars for the first two years after the measure is enacted.

Meanwhile, at a time when Measures 57, 58 and 61 could all greatly increase the fiscal burden on government institutions, Measure 59 threatens to reduce the revenue available to state government by creating a new tax break for high-income Oregon taxpayers.

We hope you will take time to consider all the measures carefully. We are proud of our voters' guide, and we are committed to providing it for all people of faith for many years to come. But, we do need to tell you that producing this guide takes hundreds of hours of staff and volunteer time, and that is combined with the costs of printing and mailing the *Guide*.

EMO is committed to continue to promote citizen engagement within faith communities and to advocate on behalf of peace, social justice and human rights, here in Oregon and nationally as well. If you appreciate this *Voters' Guide to Oregon Ballot Measures*, our Interfaith Advocacy Day or any of our other public policy activities, we hope you will support this work with a generous donation. For assistance or to make a contribution, please go to www.emoregon.org or call (503) 221-1054.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless you,



Jim Buck
President, Board of Directors



David Leslie
Executive Director

Order Form: EMO's 2008 Voters' Guide to Oregon Ballot Measures

To order copies of the *Guide* or to request an EMO ballot measure presentation for your congregation or organization, please fill out the form below. Mail form to EMO (see address on left). You may also download a PDF version of the *Guide* at www.emoregon.org.

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Measure 54

Constitutional Amendment—Standardizes voting eligibility for school board elections with other state and local elections.

Analysis — Put on ballot by legislative referral. Currently, the Oregon Constitution contains obsolete language (originally adopted in 1948), which requires voters in school board elections be 21 years of age, to live in the school district for at least six months before the election, and to pass a literacy test. All three of these requirements are unconstitutional or unenforceable under federal law. This measure would remove these school district voter eligibility requirements. Voters in school district elections would still have to satisfy all other standard voter eligibility requirements for local, state and federal elections in Oregon.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “YES.” Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon recommends a YES vote on this measure. A YES vote will remove

obsolete language from the state constitution. It is basically a housecleaning measure with little substantive importance. It is, of course, important to have state constitutional text that can be read and understood, and this measure is therefore a positive change. We are also relieved to see language about literacy tests for voting removed from the state constitution due to the long association of such tests with voter disenfranchisement; and we certainly think those who are 18, 19 and 20-years old should continue to be entitled to vote in school board elections. In short, our support for this measure is consistent with our commitment, found in our Statement of Social Principles, to promote civic engagement and public education regarding governmental decision-making. For these reasons, we recommend a YES vote on Measure 54.

Measure 56

Constitutional Amendment—Provides that local property taxes may be increased at May and November elections, if supported by a majority of voters who turnout to vote at that election (simple majority).

Analysis — Put on ballot by legislative referral. In 1996, Oregon voters adopted a “double-majority requirement” for all local property tax increases. This requires not only that a majority of voters who turnout to vote support the tax increase, but also that more than 50 percent of registered voters actually turn out to vote—thus a double majority. This measure would overturn that double majority requirement for May and November elections, thus allowing local property taxes to be increased by a simple majority vote of those voting.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “YES.” Anti-tax measures like the double-majority requirement have crippled the ability of state and local governments to provide effective services and address critical human needs. The passage of this measure is especially timely given the likely loss of federal timber revenues, which will leave many rural counties dramatically underfunded. Enhancing the ability of government to raise necessary revenue is particularly important to furthering all of the primary commitments outlined in our Statement of Social Principles—promoting human rights, economic justice and environmental stewardship. EMO recommends a YES vote on Measure 56.

Measure 57

Statutory change—Increases sentences for drug trafficking, theft against elderly and specified repeat property and identity theft crimes; requires addiction treatment for certain offenders.

Analysis — Put on ballot by legislative referral. The Oregon Secretary of State’s office has released fiscal impact statements on both Measure 57 and Measure 61 (see analysis of Measure 61 on page 3). They show that Measure 57 will require \$143 million per year in additional funding when fully operational, and that Measure 61 will require \$274 million a year when fully operational. Roughly \$40 million of the \$143 million required annually by Measure 57 is for addiction treatment programs, both in-prison and post-release. Each measure will also require the state to borrow funds to construct new prisons. Measure 57 will require \$314 million for new prison space for housing up to 1,600 additional offenders, while Measure 61 will require more than \$1.1 billion in

funding for new prison construction for housing 4,000 to 6,000 additional inmates.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.” Although some argue that this measure should be supported, since it is preferable to the harsher Measure 61, EMO believes it is still bad public policy. This measure would increase prison populations at great cost to taxpayers, likely reducing funding available for other badly needed programs. EMO urges a NO vote on Measure 57. EMO applauds the requirement for addiction treatment programs for offenders needing them, but notes that while this program is mandated by this measure, no new revenues are generated to fund this

Measure 55

Constitutional Amendment—Changes operative date of redistricting plans; allows affected legislators to finish term in original district.

Analysis — Put on ballot by legislative referral. This measure makes a minor change to the reapportionment or “redistricting” process that occurs every 10 years, based on the results of the U.S. Census. The next redistricting will occur in 2011, following the 2010 census. Redistricting occurs in order to maintain districts of equal population, and that therefore comply with the one-person one-vote decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court. Under the current system of redistricting in Oregon, representatives are assigned to new districts once the redistricting plan takes effect, and this sometimes results in two representatives being assigned to the same new district. If this occurs, one of the representatives is assigned temporarily to another district and has to fill out the remainder of their term in a district other than the one to which they were elected. The purpose of this measure is to delay the date redistricting takes effect until after the next general election, so that Representatives and Senators can continue to serve the districts they were originally elected to represent until the end of their terms.

EMO Recommendation — No Position. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is taking no position on this measure. EMO generally refers to our Statement of Social Principles as a guide to whether a measure impacts upon a core value of our religious and social beliefs. This measure, although seemingly reasonable, is primarily procedural in effect and does not seem to relate to any core principle upon which we base our recommendations. For that reason, we have declined to take a position on this measure.

Vote by mail and voter registration procedures

The Nov. 4, 2008, election is a statewide general election and will be vote by mail. The Voters’ Pamphlet will be mailed to each household by Oct. 8-10. The ballots must be returned in person or by mail to a county election office by 8 p.m. on the official election day, Nov. 4.

Any Oregon resident who is at least 18 years old on election day is eligible to vote, but voter registration is required. For new registrants, the voter registration cards must be turned in to any county election office within five calendar days after signing the card. The last day to turn in cards is Oct. 14. A registered voter who has moved, changed address or changed name must re-register. This information may be updated through election day at a county election office.

effort. Although the governor and the current co-chairs of the Legislative Ways and Means Committee are committed to funding these treatment programs, shifting fiscal and political priorities could undermine that commitment. If Measure 57 was on the ballot without Measure 61 being on the ballot, there is no doubt that we would oppose Measure 57. Therefore, we are urging voters to vote NO on both Measures 57 and 61.

Measure 58

Statutory Initiative—Prohibits teaching public school student in language other than English for more than two years.

Analysis — Current law requires all instruction except foreign language courses should be primarily in English, but allows instruction in more than one language so that students whose primary language is not English may make a transition to English. This measure restricts this bilingual education to no more than two years and would impose this restriction statewide. Along with the restriction on bilingual education, this measure establishes a new requirement for English immersion courses. As a result, this measure will require between \$203 million and \$253 million in new state funding each of the first two years after it is enacted. New funding will continue to be required beyond the first two years, though the exact amounts are difficult to estimate.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.” Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon believes educational decisions of this nature should be made by teachers and educational experts at the local level, and should not be imposed by voters in a statewide election. We are concerned that this two-year limitation on bilingual education will leave many Oregon students—whose primary language is not English—unprepared to study in an English only classroom, resulting in their unnecessarily falling behind their peers in educational development. Additionally, we are concerned that the high annual cost of this measure will require schools to make cuts to other expenses and perhaps increase class sizes. Every child deserves an equal opportunity to a good education; therefore, we oppose this measure and urge a NO vote on it.

Measure 60

Statutory Initiative—Teacher “classroom performance,” not seniority, determines pay raises; “most qualified” teachers retained, regardless of seniority.

Analysis — This is another effort to end teacher pay based on seniority. This measure requires that teacher salaries be based on classroom performance not seniority. It also requires that decisions about layoffs and/or teacher retention be based on a combination of classroom experience and past academic training, not seniority. Voters rejected a similar measure in the year 2000. The state estimates that implementation of this measure will require between \$30 million and \$72 million the first year, and between \$30 million and \$60 million each year after that.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.” Although some argue that the current system of teacher pay and retention based on seniority is flawed, we believe this measure is poorly constructed and likely to prove counter-productive. Instead of allowing public schools to retain the most qualified teachers, this measure is likely to drive many good teachers out of the public schools, especially teachers serving in schools serving low- and middle-income Oregonians. We believe moving toward a performance-based system in a way that undermines teacher job security and increases competition rather than collaboration among teachers will lead to a loss of qualified teachers from the public schools. EMO recommends a NO vote on Measure 60.

Measure 61

Statutory Initiative—Creates mandatory minimum prison sentences for certain theft, identity theft, forgery, drug and burglary crimes.

Analysis — This is the harsher of two measures concerning prison sentences that appear on the Nov. 4 ballot. This measure creates new mandatory minimum sentences for a fairly broad range of theft, identity theft, forgery, drug and burglary crimes, and applies these mandatory minimum sentences to first-time offenders. It would greatly increase the number of inmates housed in Oregon’s state prisons and would likely require Oregon to contract for prison space in other states, while new prisons are being constructed in Oregon to house the increased number of inmates. The Defend Oregon Coalition estimates that this measure would increase Oregon’s prison population by as much as 44 percent of current levels and would require the construction of three or four new prisons. The alternative measure is Measure 57, which was put on the ballot as a legislative referral.

The Oregon Secretary of State’s office has released fiscal impact statements on each of these two measures. They show that Measure 57 will require \$143 million per year in additional funding when fully operational, and that Measure 61 will require \$274 million a year when fully operational. Roughly \$40 million of the \$143 million required annually by Measure 57 is for addiction treatment programs—both in-prison and post-release. Each measure will also require the state to borrow funds to construct new prisons. Measure 57 will require \$314 million for new prison space for housing up to 1,600 additional offenders, while Measure 61 will require more than \$1.1 billion in funding for new prison construction for housing 4,000 to 6,000 additional inmates.

Measure 59

Statutory Initiative—Creates an unlimited deduction for federal income taxes on individuals’ Oregon income tax returns.

Analysis — Currently, Oregon residents filing a state income tax return are allowed to deduct up to \$5,500 of their federal tax liability from their income before calculating state income taxes owed (married couples filing individually can each take a \$2,750 subtraction). This measure would remove the \$5,500 cap and allow taxpayers who have more than \$5,500 in federal tax liability to deduct all of their federal tax liability from their income before calculating their state income tax liability. This would reduce state revenues, while reducing state taxes only for higher income taxpayers. The state fiscal impact statement estimates that this measure will reduce state income tax revenues by \$360 million the first year it takes effect, will reduce revenues by \$1 billion the second year, and reduce revenues by \$1.2 billion a year the third year after enactment. Revenues will continue to be reduced by about \$1.2 billion a year in subsequent years, subject to variation due to growth in personal income and possible changes to federal income tax liability.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.” In recent years, higher income taxpayers have already seen their federal income taxes reduced dramatically, due primarily to the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bush. At a time when additional state revenues are badly needed to fund health care for children, support the construction of affordable housing and extend the state’s earned income tax credit for lower-income working families, it makes little sense to pass a tax credit that will only benefit wealthier Oregonians. EMO strongly opposes this measure, and urges a NO vote on Measure 59.

For resources on political activities for religious groups, visit www.emoregon.org/advocacy_resources.php.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.” Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon opposes this measure. There are good alternatives to incarceration available for many first-time offenders, and judges should continue to have discretion to allow these alternatives. Requiring long mandatory minimum sentences for several categories of non-violent, first-time offenders will impose tremendous costs upon taxpayers and reduce funding available for critical human needs programs that often help to reduce crime. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon has long voiced opposition to mandatory minimum sentencing, and we have argued for developing and funding effective alternatives to prison, especially for drug-related property crimes. We urge a NO vote on Measure 61.

Measure 62

Constitutional Amendment—Allocates 15 percent of lottery proceeds to public safety fund for crime prevention, investigation and prosecution.

Analysis — Revenues from Oregon’s state lottery are currently allocated to fund K-12 public education, economic development and natural resource programs. This proposed constitutional amendment would require that 15 percent of lottery proceeds be dedicated to a public safety fund and allocated for crime prevention, investigation and prosecution. The state estimates this would allocate \$439 million in new funding for state and local public safety programs over the first four years (an average of \$110 million per year). These funds, however, would be diverted from the other programs currently funded by the state lottery.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.”

By dedicating 15 percent of lottery funding to crime programs—despite recent funding increases for state police—this measure would significantly reduce funding available for education, economic development and natural resource programs. This is a shell game that creates no new revenues for badly underfunded programs, but simply writes into the state constitution a permanent preference for funding for law enforcement over funding for education, economic development and environmental preservation. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon recommends a NO vote on Measure 62.

Measure 64

Statutory Initiative—Penalizes person or entity for using funds collected with public resource (defined) for political purpose (defined).

Analysis — This is another in a series of Oregon ballot measures primarily intended to limit the right of public employee unions to raise funds from their members for political purposes. Earlier measures were defeated by voters in 1998 and 2000. This measure refers to “money collected with public resources,” because union dues are typically collected through a payroll deduction process, by the government entity that employs the unionized public workers. This measure would shut out small dollar contributions that employees freely make from their paychecks, yet do nothing to curb large political contributions from corporation and business interests. Furthermore, because this measure is poorly and vaguely written, its full implications are unclear. Many of its provisions will no doubt be further defined through litigation. However, because of the broad and vague language included in this measure, the Defend Oregon Coalition argues that some charitable or non-profit organizations could also find their ability to participate in public policy

advocacy and education limited by the provisions of this measure. This measure has relatively minor state or local fiscal impacts.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.”

This measure will undermine the ability of public workers like teachers, firefighters, police officers and nurses to defend their economic interests in the political process and is likely to lead to further political gains for anti-tax advocates. The U.S. Supreme Court has already ruled that union workers can choose to prevent their dues from being used for political purposes by simply filling out a form. This is a poorly written measure and quite broad in its scope, so the full implications of this measure are not fully known. Some critics are concerned that this Measure will also further limit the ability of charities to engage in public discussion and advocacy on important public issues. For these reasons, EMO recommends a NO vote on Measure 64.

Measure 65

Statutory Initiative—Changes partisan primaries: primary ballots contain all candidates; top two candidates proceed to general election.

Analysis — This measure makes a substantial change to our current “closed primary” system of selecting candidates for partisan public office. Instead of a closed primary—in which registered democrats get a different ballot from registered republicans, and non-partisan voters are not allowed to vote on party nominees—a new “open primary” system would be established in which all voters in the primary election would receive the same ballot, listing all major and minor party candidates for each partisan office. In this system, only the top two candidates receiving the most votes in the primary election would appear on the November general election ballot. Depending on the strengths of various candidates and the nature of the electoral district, this could result in some cases where the general election match-up is between two candidates

of the same party or between a candidate of one of the major parties and one of the so-called “minor” parties. This measure has relatively minor state or local fiscal impacts.

EMO Recommendation — No Position.

The primary goal of this measure is to reduce partisan legislative polarization and minimize legislative gridlock. In general, this approach is expected to result in the election of more moderate legislators and office-holders. However, critics say that this process will increase the influence of special interest money, since candidates will have to appeal to the entire electorate in both the primary and general elections. It is not clear, however, whether this would or would not enhance the ability of the Legislature to enact revenue measures, pass health

Measure 63

Statutory Initiative—Exempts specified property owners from building permit requirement for improvements valued at or under \$35,000.

Analysis — This measure exempts residential and farm property owners from applicable state and local building permit requirements for improvements, when the total value of improvements made in one calendar year does not exceed \$35,000. The improvements must comply with applicable height limitations and setback requirements, and this measure requires that electrical improvements must either be done by a licensed electrical contractor or approved by one. There are no requirements to ensure the safety or soundness of plans or the environmental impact before changing a structure. The measure also does not require skilled professionals to complete a project (except for electrical work). Property owners are required to disclose improvements made without permits to prospective buyers. The state estimates that this measure will reduce local government revenue by an amount between \$4 million and \$8 million each year and will reduce state revenue by between \$450 million and \$750 million each year.

EMO Recommendation — Vote “NO.”

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon opposes Measure 63. State and local building permit requirements are enacted in order to protect neighbors and purchasers of property and for important public safety reasons. The permitting and inspection process is an important element in ensuring compliance with these requirements. Since the \$35,000 exemption in this initiative is available for each calendar year, a \$70,000 project could be completed without a permit over two years or a \$120,000 project over three years. Eliminating permit requirements will undermine the planning and public safety systems and deprive local governments of an important revenue source. We urge a NO vote on Measure 63.

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care reform and/or enact other measures that would further the interests of low-income Oregonians or those struggling against a legacy of inadequate representation in the political process due to race, religion or other factors. EMO was also concerned about the fact that a similar measure has only just taken effect in Washington state, and therefore we have little data yet on how this system is likely to work in practice. Given the uncertainty about the impacts of this generally well-intentioned measure, we felt it best to remain neutral on this measure, and we are taking no position on it.