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Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon opposes new casino, endorses voter owned elections

At their Sept. 15, 2010, meeting, the Board of Directors of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) passed resolutions opposing the proposed construction of a privately held casino in Wood Village, Ore., and in support of the voter owned elections bill. Recognizing the need to speak out on other important measures, the EMO Board has produced a voter guide with a full listing of recommendations for clergy and lay people on seven statewide measures. Copies of the “EMO 2010 Voters’ Guide to Oregon Ballot Measures,” are being sent to churches across the state; it is also available online at www.emoregon.org.

In announcing the recommendations, EMO Executive Director David Leslie highlighted the Board’s opposition to Measure 75, which would authorize a non-tribal casino in Multnomah County. “EMO opposes all forms of legalized gambling,” said Leslie, “because the cost in terms of gambling addiction and impacts on families is just too high. It is important to acknowledge that gaming and gambling are not simply innocuous recreational pastimes, but big business enterprises that do not always factor in the well-being of the broader society as part of their bottom line. The adverse impacts on existing businesses and neighborhoods, increased law enforcement costs, and shifting of funds from the state to the local level must be taken into account, while the supposed economic benefits are greatly overstated by supporters.”

The EMO Board also voted to support City of Portland Measure 26-108 because EMO believes the measure has “both statewide and national significance.” EMO Board President Rev. Lynne Smouse López comments on the measure: “Because we have an important role to play in protecting the interests of the poor and vulnerable, it is consistent with our religious values to support the voter-owned election system established in Portland. We believe this is an important means to allow more individuals, especially to those without wealth or large power bases, to become involved in the election process.”

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MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ American Baptist Churches of Oregon ■ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ■ Christian Methodist Episcopal Church ■ Church of the Brethren ■ Community of Christ
Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon ■ Episcopal Diocese of Oregon ■ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ■ Greek Orthodox Church ■ Presbyterian Church (USA)—Presbytery of the Cascades
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) ■ Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland ■ United Church of Christ ■ United Methodist Church ■ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

EMO Public Policy Director Kevin Finney and other EMO representatives will be making presentations this fall at churches throughout Oregon on EMO's ballot measure recommendations. If you would like to schedule a presentation, please contact him directly at kfinney@emoregon.org or (503) 221-1054, ext. 204. Finney is also available to appear on radio and TV public affairs shows.

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.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian denominations—including Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox bodies—congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.