

No (one more time) on Measure 64

Voters keep vetoing this attack on public workers, while its danger to Oregon just gets worse

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Three times before this election, Bill Sizemore has put a version of Measure 64 on the ballot. Three times, the people of Oregon have rejected it, and each time he has returned, because collecting signatures to put measures on the ballot is what he does.

It's a living.

Which is why Sizemore already has a similar measure filed for 2010.

There seems to be no real campaign for Measure 64; Sizemore's revenue source is only in the signature gathering. But it's still a measure of considerable danger to Oregon, a measure opposed not only by the unions it targets, but also by groups such as the United Way, the Oregon Parent Teachers Association and the Oregon Food Bank.

Measure 64 is aimed at Oregon's public employee unions, banning the use of payroll deductions for political purposes. Few other states have such a law, but since unions are the most active opponents of Sizemore's multiple measures, you can see why he and Loren Parks -- the eightysomething Las Vegas multimillionaire who finances most of Sizemore's signature-collecting efforts -- would want to silence their voices.

Of course, this would have the effect of giving Oregon firefighters and nurses less voice in Oregon politics than Loren Parks, which is not most Oregonians' view of how things should work.

But the measure also runs the risk of badly hurting Oregon charitable organizations, which is why so many of them have raised their voices loudly in the campaign. Oregon public employees contribute to many state charities through payroll deductions, and the charities are concerned, after reading the measure's language and consulting attorneys, that they will be banned from speaking on behalf of their clients.

"Measure 64 has unintended consequences that hurt many of Oregon's most respected charities," writes Phil Kalberer, chair of the Oregon Food Bank board of directors. ". . . Measure 64 prohibits Oregon Food Bank and many other organizations from collecting funds from public resources or on public property. This means Oregon Food Bank would be prohibited from (and possibly fined for) conducting food drives and fundraisers on public property, which includes schools and libraries."

Again, Oregon has already rejected this measure three times. But without changing significantly, it's actually gotten more dangerous since 2000. Since then, the practice of charitable giving by state workers through payroll deductions has become more widespread, putting charitable organizations at much greater risk.

Oregon voters should reject this dangerous, badly devised measure. They should also reject it in 2010, and probably in 2012.