



Outcome of Ballot Measures in the General Election

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Overview

Voters in 6 states considered 38 ballot measures in this year's general election. All bond measures on state ballots were approved with the exception of proposed funding for stem cell research in New Jersey. Other funding measures, such as the proposal to increase cigarette taxes to fund health care in Oregon and dedicating revenue equal to 1 percent of the sales and tax for property tax relief in New Jersey were not approved.

Voters in Utah decided not to implement a school voucher program that had been approved by the legislature in February 2007. Maine's measure to extend term limits for legislators from 4 to 6 terms was not approved. Voters in Maine also did not approve a Maine tribe to run a harness racing track with slot machines.

Washington State voters approved an initiative that requires a two-thirds vote in the legislature to pass tax increases and legislative approval of all fee increases. A constitutional amendment to transfer 1 percent of state revenues to a budget stabilization account was also approved in Washington State.

Oregon's voters decided to modify Measure 37 which had previously passed in 2004 that dealt with private landowners' rights. Claimants will not be able to build more than three homes on high value farmlands, forestlands, and ground-water restricted lands and the measure will not allow claims for strip malls, mines, and other commercial and industrial uses.

The following are some notable ballot measures in the 2007 general election that could affect state finances and the outcome of those measures.

Cigarette Tax Increases

Oregon Measure 50—Did Not Pass

This constitutional amendment would have increased the tax on cigarettes by 84.5 cents per pack and increased taxes on other tobacco products to fund health care for children and low-income adults and fund tobacco prevention programs. The measure would have increased state revenue by an estimated \$152.7 million for 2007-2009 and \$233.2 million the following two-year period.

Property Tax Relief

New Jersey Public Question 1—Did Not Pass

This proposed amendment to the constitution would have dedicated an amount equal to 1 percent of the revenue from the sales and use tax for property tax reform. Revenues would have been placed in a special Property Tax Reform Account established in the constitutionally dedicated Property Tax Relief Fund.

School Vouchers

Utah Citizens' State Referendum Number 1—Did Not Pass

This referendum would have established a scholarship program for qualifying school-age children who newly enroll in eligible private schools and lower-income school-age children who continue their enrollment in eligible private schools and allow school districts to retain some per-student funding for scholarship students who transfer to private schools. The Utah Legislature approved the school voucher program (H.B. 148) in February 2007. The school voucher program would have only taken effect if approved by the voters in this referendum.

Gaming

Maine Question One—Did Not Pass

This measure would have allowed a Maine tribe to run a harness racing track with slot machines and high-stakes beano (bingo) games in Washington County.

Development/Eminent Domain

Oregon Measure 49--Passed

This measure modifies Measure 37, previously passed in 2004, and clarifies private landowners' rights to build homes and protect farmlands, forestlands, and groundwater supplies. Claimants will not be able to build more than three homes on high value farmlands, forestlands, and ground-water restricted lands and the measure will not allow claims for strip malls, mines, and other commercial and industrial uses. This measure authorizes compensation to landowners though the amount of state and local expenditures for compensation to landowners cannot be determined.

Texas Proposition 7--Passed

This constitutional amendment allows governmental entities to sell property acquired through eminent domain back to the previous owners at the price the entities paid to acquire property.

Legislative Process

Maine Referendum Five—Did Not Pass

This measure would have extended term limits for Legislators from 4 to 6 consecutive 2-year terms for members of both the House and Senate.

Washington Senate Joint Resolution 8206--Passed

This constitutional amendment requires the legislature to transfer 1 percent of general state revenues to a budget stabilization account each year and prohibits expenditures from the account except as set forth in the amendment.

Washington Initiative Measure 960--Passed

This initiative requires two-thirds vote by the legislature to approve tax increases, legislative approval of fee increases, requires certain published information on tax-increasing bills, and requires advisory votes on taxes enacted without voter approval.

State Borrowing

Maine Questions Two, Three and Four--Passed

These bond issues provide \$5 million in loans and grant funds and \$50 million in research, development and commercialization funds to targeted technology sectors awarded after a competitive process; authorize \$43.5 million in bonds for building renovations, improvements, additions in college and university campuses, replenish the school revolving renovation fund and cultural and educational assets; and authorize \$35.5 million in bonds to invest in land conservation, water access, and outdoor recreation to be matched by at least \$21.9 million in private and public contributions.

New Jersey Public Questions 2 and 3—Did Not Pass (Question 2) and Passed (Question 3)

This bond issue would have authorized \$450 million in general obligation bonds for grants to fund stem cell research projects provided that recurring revenues of the State are certified by the State Treasurer to pay off the debt service obligations and authorizes \$200 million in general obligation bonds for green acres, historic preservation and farmland to preserve open space.

Texas Propositions 2, 4, 12, 15, and 16--Passed

These constitutional amendments allow the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to issue up to \$500 million in general obligation bonds for college and university students to use for educational loans; authorize up to \$1 billion in general obligation bonds for maintenance, improvement, repair, and construction projects and equipment; provide up to \$5 billion in general obligation bonds by the Texas Transportation Commission for funding highway improvement projects; authorize up to \$3 billion in general obligation bonds to fund research in Texas to find the causes and cures for cancer, and authorize up to \$250 million in general obligation bonds to provide assistance to economically distressed areas.

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