

Caption:

Five-Year Levy: Oregon Historical Society Library, Museum, educational programs.

Question:

Shall County support history library, museum, educational programs with 5-year levy of \$.05 per \$1,000 assessed valuation, with oversight?

Summary:

The Oregon Historical Society (OHS) houses and preserves Oregon's collection of historical documents, photos, books, maps and artifacts. The OHS Library and Museum provide public access for school field trips, for individuals and families to view changing exhibits, and to research all of Oregon's history.

The State of Oregon has cut funding to OHS. OHS has greatly reduced hours open to the public. Without additional funds, OHS facilities will close to the public beginning in spring, 2011.

This measure enacts a five-year local option levy of \$.05 per \$1,000 assessed property value to keep the Oregon History Library and Museum open to the public. It funds:

- Restoration of hours open to the public for the Oregon History Museum and Library;
- Free admission for all schoolchildren, and all Multnomah County residents, to Museum and Library.

An independent citizen oversight committee will ensure tax dollars are spent as promised. Annual audits will be conducted and made public.

A home assessed by the county at \$200,000 pays \$10 a year for this levy.

Explanatory Statement:

Established in 1898, the Oregon Historical Society collects and maintains the county and state's major collection of Oregon, Portland, and Multnomah County historical documents, letters, photographs, books, maps, artifacts and more. About 60% of the library materials relate directly to Multnomah County history, and OHS acts as the Multnomah County Historical Society.

The Oregon Historical Society – located in downtown Portland with storage of additional materials in Gresham, Oregon – includes the Oregon History Museum and the Oregon History Library. Approximately 40,000 visitors use these facilities a year, including about 8,000 schoolchildren, to research specific Oregon history questions and view Oregon history exhibits.

The OHS Library and Museum have received state funding in the past; however for the last decade those funds have been substantially reduced, causing cuts to hours and services at the museum and library. Without another source of funds, the Oregon History Museum will close facilities by spring of 2011 or sooner. The library will be open limited hours, although not indefinitely.

This Multnomah County local option levy will keep the Oregon History Museum open 40 hours a week and the Library open to the public 32+ hours a week - avoiding closure and restoring cuts to service. It supports curation for the museum so that exhibits can be rotated and the collection and protection of Oregon's historical artifacts and documents can continue. Levy funds will also protect the collection of Oregon history documents and artifacts, and public access to those, at four East Multnomah County Historical Societies which together will receive \$150,000 of the levy each of the five years. OHS levy funds shall be allocated in a manner that represents Multnomah County's diverse cultures.

The levy supports continuation of educational programs including free admission for every schoolchild to visit the museum and for all county residents - providing access to those previously unable to visit due to cost.

The cost of the levy is up to \$.05 (five cents) per \$1,000 assessed property value, beginning 2011 through 2016. For example, the owner of a home assessed by the county at \$200,000 will pay \$10 a year for this levy.

The levy will raise an estimated \$2.24 million for fiscal year 2011-2012; \$2.31 million for fiscal year 2012-13; \$2.41 million for fiscal year 2013-2014; \$2.50 million for fiscal year 2014-2015; and \$2.59 million for fiscal year 2015-2016. The figures above are estimates only, based on the best information available from the County Assessor at the time of estimate.

Accountability is a component of the levy. The Multnomah County Chair will appoint an independent citizens oversight committee – representative of Multnomah County's diverse communities - to review all levy expenditures and ensure dollars are spent as promised. In addition, Multnomah County will select an auditor for which OHS will pay to conduct annual audits of levy funds that will be made available to the public.

This levy will fund nearly one-half of operations at OHS facilities. Other funds come from admissions, grants and private donations. To consistently provide the services promised to the voters, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners will consider termination or reduction of the levy if the State of Oregon restores funding to OHS.