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Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon issues recommendations on 2008 ballot measures Cites risk to fiscal health of Oregon in opposing Measures 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63 and 64

The Board of Directors of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) has issued recommendations to voters on the 12 statewide ballot measures in its “2008 Voters’ Guide to Oregon Ballot Measures.” The guides are being sent to churches across the state. It is also available at www.emoregon.org.

The following are the board’s recommendations on the 2008 statewide ballot measures: Vote “Yes” for Measures 54 and 56; EMO takes no position for Measures 55 and 65; and vote “No” for Measures 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63 and 64.

In releasing the Voter’s Guide, EMO Executive Director David Leslie highlighted the threat posed by several measures on the November Ballot to the fiscal health of Oregon and to education, health and human service programs:

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. 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, also turns out to be extremely costly. The Legislative Revenue Office has indicated that the increased costs due to Measure 58 alone are likely to be at least \$406 million dollars for the first two years it is in effect.

Meanwhile, at a time when several proposed measures could greatly increase the fiscal burden on government institutions, Measure 59 threatens to dramatically reduce the revenue available to state government by creating a large new tax break for high-income Oregon taxpayers. In fact, Measure 59 is expected to reduce state general fund revenue by \$1.3 billion in the 2009-2011 biennium and by \$2.4 billion in the 2011-2013 biennium. That represents a 14 percent reduction in general fund revenues available for education, health care and human service programs in the 2011-2013 biennium.

“Our primary mission, as a faith-based organization, is to work to reduce poverty and defend the interests of the weak and vulnerable,” said Kevin Finney, public policy director for Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. “We rely on the

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MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church □ American Baptist Churches □ 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) □ Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland □ United Church of Christ □ United Methodist Church □ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

principle that each person is created in the image of God and has certain fundamental human rights. If several of these budget-busting measures are enacted, it is all Oregonians who will suffer, but especially those who depend on state and local government for health care, human services and a quality education.”

Finney and other EMO representatives will be making presentations this fall 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.

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. EMO has also adopted a “Statement of Social Principles,” which guides its public policy advocacy work. This statement affirms the value of involvement with civic affairs and the governmental process.

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.