

NORTHWEST HEALTH FOUNDATION

Commentary

NWHF Urges Oregonians to Vote YES on 66 and 67

December 14, 2009 — The mission of the Northwest Health Foundation is to advance, support and promote the health of the people of Oregon and southwest Washington.

Unfortunately, the health of many of the people of Oregon is threatened by the cuts that would have to be made if ballot measures 66 and 67 are defeated in January 2010.

Right now, more Oregonians need food stamps, unemployment benefits, and Medicaid assistance than ever before. At the same time, the current economic crisis has damaged the state's ability to fund essential services, including public health programs. If ballot measures 66 and 67 are rejected this January, Oregon will have to cut a wide variety of services — many of which will hit seniors, children and unemployed individuals the hardest.

The Foundation supports public policies that address the wide range of factors that influence the public's health. These factors include health care services, but also education, housing, poverty, and access to physical activity and affordable nutritious food, to name a few.

Public education would also be one of the most affected budget areas if these measures fail. Because public education is also a strong determinant of the health of the population, this is another influencing factor in the Foundation's support for these ballot measures.

Funding for public services always requires the contribution of those who can, to advance the common good. In this case, to support the health of many is accomplished by a personal tax increase on individuals with income above \$125,000 and households above \$250,000. A business tax increase would elevate the \$10 minimum tax to \$150, and would introduce new marginal taxes for certain companies above certain revenue thresholds.

Taxes are the way in which all people participate in the well-being of our community, and the Foundation's analysis has concluded that this is a relatively fair, if imperfect, shared contribution to help shore up funding for the critical services for so many residents of this great state. Supporting the health of the vulnerable is, after all, an important component of advancing the health of everyone.

Northwest Health Foundation endorses the Oregon ballot measures 66 and 67 and urges all Oregonians vote YES on these measures in January 2010.

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