



# Ballot Initiative STRATEGY CENTER

## Ballot Bulletin

January 2010

Happy New Year!

With the New Year comes a big election out West on January 26<sup>th</sup> in Oregon. Voters are being asked to approve a progressive tax fairness reform plan passed by the legislature. Voting Yes on Measures 66 and 67 will protect our schools and critical services when people need them most by asking corporations and households that make more than \$250,000 to pay a little more.

In a year where the national economy has hit state budgets hard across the country, Oregon's tax fairness reforms protect middle class in these difficult times. In addition to excluding the first \$2,400 of unemployment payments from state income taxes for those that have lost their jobs in this tough economy, the reforms protect 97.5% of taxpayers.

[\*The Register Guard\* newspaper has reported](#) that "under next month's Ballot Measure 67, most of those 400,000 businesses would not pay a penny more in taxes, while a quarter would see their taxes increase by \$150. That leaves about 14,000 companies — Oregon's largest, most profitable — paying most of the measure's \$235 million tax increase in 2009-11."

What's at stake in this election? The Yes on 66 and 67 campaign has put together an [interactive map](#) that shows just some of the examples of what's at stake for children, seniors, and struggling families across the state.

In November, Maine and Washington voters soundly rejected two so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) ballot measures. As E.J. Dionne Jr. wrote in a column following the election, ["voters decided not to be part of a laboratory experiment being pushed by the Beltway Right."](#)

Will Oregon be a bellwether of voter attitudes on fiscal issues going into the 2010 fall elections? Let's hope citizens say *Yes!*

## Making the List

At the Nation, John Nichols has worked up a year-end list of Most Valuable Progressives and guess who made the list?

[BISC was named Most Valuable Think Tank](#) for our work to prevent abuses of the petitioning process by special interests. Our 2009 report, "[Ballot Integrity: A Broken System in Need of Solutions](#)," was highlighted for inspiring newspaper editorials, legal actions and legislative initiatives to crack down on fraudulent petitioning to place issues on state and local ballots. Congratulations to the tireless work of our Director of Ballot Integrity, Joel Foster.

## "Sunshine is the best disinfectant"

The Boston Globe also takes note of our report, "[Ballot Integrity: A Broken System in Need of Solutions](#)," and weighs in on a case that could be taken up by the US Supreme Court. The right wing legal actions in Washington State are part of an aggressive and multi-faceted strategy aimed at undermining the ballot integrity with an assault on the transparency of the ballot initiative process. The right wing legal action has prevented disclosure of signature petitions in order [to hide any abuse, deception and fraud](#) that may have been used to "qualify" their initiative to repeal domestic partnerships in the first place.

[The Globe writes](#), "The move to protect the signers' privacy was misguided. The high court should take the next opportunity to address the merits of the case - and allow the names to be released. Putting one's name behind a cause is a public act of citizen-legislating. Like the names of people who contribute to political campaigns, signers' names should be open records, so they can be vetted for fraud and so others can learn the advocacy agendas of individuals and groups."