

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 25, 2006

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OREGON VOTERS CALL 2004 PROPERTY MEASURES A MISTAKE

New poll a warning to voters facing similar measures in other states

Washington, D.C. – By nearly a 2-to-1 margin, Oregon voters now oppose Measure 37, the controversial property initiative they passed in 2004, according to a new poll commissioned by Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund and the Izaak Walton League of America. Critics of Measure 37 say the poll, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, is a warning to voters in California, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Arizona, who are considering similar measures on November 7th.

Most of the initiatives are being sold to voters as eminent domain reform, but hidden in the fine print are provisions similar to Measure 37 that could cost taxpayers billions of dollars, rollback safeguards for neighborhoods and communities, and create an expensive tangle of new lawsuits.

“We thought it was important to find out what voters in Oregon think of Measure 37 now that they are living with its consequences,” said Rodger Schlickeisen, president of Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund. “Clearly they have buyer’s remorse. The message to voters in other states is to think carefully about what the real impact would be and don’t be fooled by simplistic and deceptive ballot titles.”

According to the poll, a large majority of Oregon voters (83 percent) have knowledge of Measure 37. In 2004, it passed with 61 percent of the vote in Oregon. But if the election were held today, Measure 37 would lose by a wide margin. Opponents of Measure 37 now outnumber supporters 48 percent to 29 percent, and fully two-thirds (66 percent) of voters who have heard a lot about Measure 37 would now vote no, while just 26 percent would vote yes. Of voters who said they had heard a lot about Measure 37, 62 percent believe its passage was a mistake.

“Measure 37 is a nightmare for Oregon because it creates loopholes that undermine laws that protect communities and wildlife from irresponsible development,” says Paul Hansen, Izaak Walton League’s executive director. “I call these measures ‘bad neighbor’ initiatives, since they work to defend the worst behavior of some property owners and don’t consider the impact on neighbors.”

“The more people hear about Measure 37, the more they oppose it,” said Ben Tulchin with Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, the firm that conducted the poll. “The results

show a remarkable reversal of opinion as Oregon voters now strongly oppose Measure 37.”

A strong majority of Oregon voters agree that Measure 37 could cost taxpayers millions of dollars (61 percent), that it has created a lot of uncertainty (72 percent) and that it will allow development in previously protected farmland and open space (61 percent).

The poll tested specific examples of the impacts of Measure 37 that have been in the news in Oregon recently. A strong majority of Oregon voters took a less favorable view after hearing the following real cases about Measure 37:

- A proposed industrial gravel pit would be permitted in what is currently a rural residential neighborhood. (68 percent of voters felt less favorable)
- A mining company would be permitted to develop a mine in a national monument and scenic area that was previously protected. (84 percent of voters felt less favorable)
- 300 houses to be developed on previously protected farmland. (78 percent of voters felt less favorable)
- A four-story condominium building would be allowed in a neighborhood of single family homes. (76 percent of voters felt less favorable)

Like Oregon’s Measure 37, the initiatives in other states would require taxpayers to pay off certain landowners and developers to follow basic zoning and other laws that protect neighborhoods and communities, or else waive those laws altogether. Two years after Oregon passed Measure 37, more than 2,200 new development claims have been made, demanding more than \$5 billion of taxpayer money. Oregon taxpayers are already spending millions of dollars just to process those claims, many of which will only be settled after years of expensive lawsuits.

Numerous news stories have identified the main promoter of these initiatives as Howie Rich, a New York mogul who has made billions from real estate development.

Schlickeisen concluded, “There’s a reason that promoters of these initiatives are in such a rush to get them enacted in so many states. They know that the true, negative impacts will become obvious over time – as they clearly are becoming now in Oregon.”

Property measures modeled after Measure 37 are currently on the ballot in four Western states, including California (Proposition 90), Washington (Initiative 933), Idaho (Proposition 2) and Arizona (Proposition 207).

The polling memo is available on the Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund at: <http://www.defendersactionfund.org/newsroom/oregonpoll.pdf> and the Izaak Walton League of America at: <http://iwla.org/>

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The Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund provides a powerful voice in Washington to Americans who value our conservation heritage. Through grassroots lobbying, issue advocacy and political campaigns, the Action Fund champions those laws and lawmakers that protect wildlife and wild places while working against those that do them harm.

Founded in 1922, the Izaak Walton League of America is dedicated to common sense conservation that protects America's hunting, fishing, and outdoor heritage relying on solution-oriented conservation, education, and the promotion of outdoor recreation for the benefit of our citizens. The League has more than 40,000 members and supporters in 21 state divisions and more than 300 local chapters in 32 states.