



Advocacy Alert

OREGON FOOD BANK
OREGON HUNGER RELIEF TASK FORCE

January 2003
Volume 9 Issue 3



take five

(actions that take five minutes or less)

Action: Join **Speak Up for Oregon**, a new email action alert list!

Background: Oregon Food Bank, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, Community Action Directors of Oregon, Children First for Oregon, and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon have set up a new email alert list to spread the word about anti-poverty activities during the 2003 state legislative session. List members will receive weekly updates on actions they can take to promote a better future for all Oregonians.

To join the email list:

Go online to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SpeakUpforOregon/join> or email us at speakupforOregon@yahoo.com.

Legislative Yellow Pages

State Legislative Information
1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem)
(503) 986-1000 (in Salem)
www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide

Federal Legislative Contacts
Rep. Wu (District 1)
(503) 326-2901
Rep. Walden (District 2)
(541) 776-4646
Rep. Blumenauer (District 3)
(503) 231-2300
Rep. DeFazio (District 4)
(541) 465-6732
Rep. Hooley (District 5)
(503) 588-9100
Senator Smith
(503) 326-3386
Senator Wyden
(503) 326-7525

Special election on January 28: Measure 28 helps Oregon get back on track

This month voters will have a chance to do something positive for Oregon's economic recovery by voting "yes" on Measure 28. By passing the temporary income tax surcharge, Oregon voters will protect basic state services and keep the state open for business and able to attract new jobs.

Measure 28 will raise the needed state funds *right now* to protect our state against further cuts to education, public safety, and services to vulnerable Oregonians. It will also raise additional funds to give the Legislature some breathing room to fix long-

term problems such as tax reform and PERS.

Oregon Food Bank is concerned about the state's economic stability. Hunger is directly related to whether

✓ **Vote YES
on Measure 28**

people have access to services, living wage jobs, and education and training. These areas are all suffering from continuing budget cuts. If Oregon improves economically, the hunger situation will improve.

Measure 28 raises personal and corporate income taxes from 2002 through 2004. The top personal income tax bracket increases from 9.0% to 9.5%. Corporate tax rates increase from 6.6% to 6.93%.

For *less than* \$9.50 per month for most Oregonians, we can preserve the most basic services and speed up our economic recovery.

For more information about Measure 28, go to www.yeson28.com.

For details of the cuts that will go into effect if Measure 28 fails, go to www.hr.state.or.us/budget/reductions.html.

Anti-hunger advocates ready for 2003 session

Oregon Food Bank, the statewide network of regional food banks, and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force will be teaming up to work on a variety of issues during the 2003 Legislative Session. Here is a preview of some of their priorities:

Summer Food: Expanding access to the federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) by phasing in a requirement that school districts in very high-need areas offer SFSP sites in their communities, or make sure another qualified group is offering the program. Currently, SFSP in Oregon only serves about one of every six children receiving free or reduced price meals during the school year.

Parents as Scholars: Permitting the pursuit of post-

secondary certificates or degrees as a work activity under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, thereby allowing a limited number of qualified low-income parents and their children to continue to receive cash grants and support services while attending school.

Food Stamp Outreach: Asking the state to renew its \$100,000 commitment to statewide outreach efforts to increase participation in the federal Food Stamp Program.

Farmer's Market Nutrition Programs: Asking the state to increase state funds to expand access to the Women, Infants, and Children's (WIC) Farmer's Market Nutrition Program and to commit new funds to the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program.

Tax Reform: Supporting state tax reform proposals that address the issues of fairness (ability to pay), adequacy (ability to fund important state services), and sustainability (ability to weather economic downturns).

Low-Income Renters Tax Credit: Providing a small amount of tax relief for households struggling to cover housing costs and also feed their families.

Strengthening the Safety Net: Increasing the eligibility and benefit levels for TANF, the basic income safety net for very low-income families with dependent children.

See the "Take Five" this page to sign up for a new weekly email action alert list to stay informed on these and other issues.

Lobbying and 501(c)(3) organizations: yes, you may!

This article is provided as an overview of political activities that 501(c)(3) organizations may do. This is NOT legal advice or a complete guide to these activities. If you have questions about your organization's specific situation, please talk to your tax advisor or an attorney familiar with IRS rules.

As the State Legislature returns to Salem and a new Congress convenes in Washington, D.C., it is a good time to review what 501(c)(3) organizations can and cannot do under tax law in the realm of political activity.

Always remember that advocacy and lobbying are not the same thing. Lobbying is a very specific kind of advocacy. Everyone can advocate, i.e., speak up, discuss an issue, make a case for a cause you care about. Lobbying involves attempts to influence the decisions of elected representatives about

specific pieces of legislation.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has various designations for not-for-profit organizations. The 501(c)(3) designation allows tax-exempt donations to charitable organizations. The designation then dictates what type of political activity organizations may be involved in. There are two types of activity that nonprofits can engage in: (1) lobbying and (2) voter education and participation activities.

Lobbying involves influencing federal, state or local legislation. Voter education and participation activities take place during election periods but must not influence election outcomes or support or oppose candidates. According to the Alliance for Justice, "while 501c3 organizations are absolutely prohibited from 'electioneering' for or against candidates for public office, lobbying is permitted."

Lobbying is allowed for 501(c)(3) organizations as long as lobbying is not the majority of the organization's overall activities. Federal law limits the amount of lobbying organizations can undertake. However, both direct and grassroots lobbying are allowed.

Direct lobbying

Direct lobbying can take many forms, but is defined as any attempt to influence local, state, or federal legislation by contacting any member of a legislature, legislative staff, or government employee to influence legislation. Direct lobbying includes writing letters to members of the legislature, calling members of the legislature or their staff, or sharing reports or fact sheets

that support or oppose a specific proposal with a legislative representative or staff.

Grassroots lobbying

Grassroots lobbying is any attempt to influence local, state, or federal legislation by attempting to influence public opinion and get the public to act. Grassroots lobbying includes expressing a view for or against pending or specific legislation AND encouraging the public to take action on the legislation. If the communication does not do both things, then it is simply a public education activity and does not need to be counted as lobbying.

What is NOT lobbying?

Examples of activities not counted as lobbying include:

- Communicating with the public about the effects of specific legislation without urging the public to take action;
- Sharing information on the legislative process and how to lobby if there is no focus on specific legislation (this article, for example);
- Reports given to legislators or staff that discuss a particular issue but provide enough objective, nonpartisan information for readers to draw their own conclusions and the materials are made available to the general public; and
- Responses to written requests from committees or other legislative bodies for assistance.

Voter education and participation activities

The IRS allows 501(c)(3) organizations to undertake nonpartisan activities to:

- Educate the public about issues or encourage citi-

zens to exercise the right to vote.

- Sponsor or conduct public forums or debates at which candidates appear and state their views.
- Distribute questionnaires.

Ballot measure activity

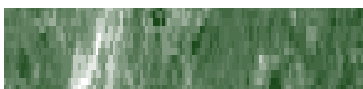
The IRS treats ballot measure advocacy as "influencing legislation" or lobbying since initiatives involve passing laws NOT selecting public officials. As long as federal funds are not used for activities that qualify as lobbying, 501(c)(3) organizations may engage in working for or against ballot measures.

Lobbying limits

Congress has stated that influencing legislation is an appropriate and legitimate activity for charitable organizations. The IRS has specified lobbying limits as a portion of a nonprofit's budget. Check with your tax advisor about the options for determining how much lobbying your organization can do, or check with one of the resources below.

Additional resources

- Alliance for Justice, www.afj.org, (202) 822-6070
- Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest, www.clpi.org, (202) 387-5048



The Advocacy Alert is published jointly by the Oregon Food Bank (OFB) and the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force (OHRTF).

OFB Advocacy Staff:
 (503) 282-0555 [Portland area]
 1-800-777-7427 [outside Portland]
 Kim Thomas X206
 Tina Kotek X204
 Cassandra Garrison X210
<http://www.oregonfoodbank.org>
advocacy@oregonfoodbank.org

OHRTF Staff:
 Patti Whitney-Wise
 (503) 963-2290
patti.w@hcs.state.or.us

Holly Wilkalis, (503) 963-2292
holly.wilkalis@hcs.state.or.us

Nancy Weed, (503) 998-6194
nancyweed@aol.com

Food Stamps ■ WIC
 School Meals
 Oregon Health Plan

Call 1-800-SAFENET!
 1-800-723-3638
 TDD/Spanish/multilingual

or visit

Oregon Helps!
www.oregonhelps.org