



League of Women Voters State Ballot Measure Review 2016 Measure 99 Creates “Outdoor School Education Fund

Creates “Outdoor School Education Fund,” continuously funded through Lottery, to provide outdoor school programs statewide.

Initiative: This measure is a statutory amendment placed on the ballot by initiative petition with an estimated 93,102 valid signatures.

Financial Impact: Up to four percent (or \$5.5 million) of the moneys from the Oregon Lottery Economic Development Fund would be transferred quarterly to a new Outdoor School Education Fund. The total to be deposited into the Outdoor School Fund would be capped at \$22 million per year. This amount would be adjusted annually according to the Consumer Price Index.

Probable results of a YES VOTE: If this measure passes, a separate fund would be established to provide outdoor school programs statewide. It would be financed through the Oregon Lottery Economic Development Fund and administered by Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service.

Probable results of a NO VOTE: If this measure fails, no special fund would be established to provide outdoor school programs statewide.

Background: Oregon's first Outdoor School was started in Medford in 1957 and outdoor schools expanded to other school districts throughout Oregon during the following decades. Currently, all but four Oregon counties have some outdoor school programs, although 20 counties have fewer than 40% of their students participating, and many provide only a 2-night program rather than a full week. Funding for these programs is provided primarily through a combination of donations, fees, grants from foundations, and support from school districts, education service districts and local governments. In 2015 the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 439 establishing an Outdoor Education Account in the State Treasury to support outdoor school programs for fifth or sixth grade students throughout Oregon. The bill also provided that the Oregon State University Extension Service would administer the Fund and distribute grants from available funds. However, although the original bill included \$44 million from the Oregon General Fund to fund the programs in 2015-17, this funding was omitted from the final bill.

The Oregon State Lottery provides a significant source of funding to supplement the state General Fund. Net profits are transferred to the Oregon Economic Development Fund for distribution to specific programs. The Constitution dedicates 18% of net proceeds to the Education Stability Fund and 15% to a Parks and Natural Resources Fund. The Legislature decides how to allocate the remaining lottery funds. In some cases, Oregon statutes dedicate some lottery revenue to particular programs, including gambling addiction treatment, collegiate sports programs, the County Fair account and county economic development programs. After considering other priorities, the Legislature decides whether to fully fund these statutory dedications from the Lottery Fund. Oregon is also obligated to pay debt service on Lottery Revenue Bonds and the debt service payments are almost always made with Lottery revenue. For the 2015-17 Oregon budget, the total net lottery revenues were almost \$1.2 billion. After the constitutional requirements and debt service payments, the remaining revenue available for distribution was about \$598 million. Most of this, 76%, was allotted to education and about 17% to economic development programs.

Proposal:

Ballot Measure 99 proposes to provide funding to give all Oregon fifth or sixth grade students the opportunity to participate in environmental education through the field study of “natural sciences and responsible use of natural resources.” The measure does not mandate outdoor education for all schools, but the goal is to make a week-long Outdoor School (or similar hands-on science experiences in the outdoors) accessible to all students throughout the state. The measure creates a separate Outdoor School Education Fund that is financed by net revenues from the Oregon State Lottery Fund. The measure requires that the lesser of 4% of the net lottery revenues or \$5.5 million must be deposited every three months into the Outdoor School Fund. The total dollar amount would be limited to \$22 million per year (or up to \$44 million per biennium), with this figure adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index. Grants for outdoor school programs would be awarded by the Oregon State University Extension Service, which would also provide assistance and program leadership, as authorized by 2015 Senate Bill 439. Allocations to



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the Fund could not reduce lottery proceeds dedicated under the Oregon Constitution to education, parks and wildlife, but could reduce the amounts of lottery funding that now go to other educational and/or economic development programs. However, because this is a statutory dedication, the legislature would have some flexibility to decide whether to fully fund it if legislators believe that other educational or economic development programs should have priority.

Supporters Say:

- Outdoor education provides hands-on learning students can't get inside the classroom. Research shows these programs build life skills (self-confidence, leadership, teamwork and collaboration); spark interest in science and math; and improve school attendance and academic performance.
- Measure 99 creates a stable, dedicated funding source for Outdoor School without raising taxes.
- Currently, about half of Oregon students don't have the opportunity to attend Outdoor School, primarily because their schools do not have enough funding to participate.
- Dedicated funding for Outdoor School would benefit Oregon's economy by creating full-time jobs in rural Oregon.

Opponents Say:

- Dedicating lottery funding to Outdoor School could reduce the funding for economic development programs that create jobs statewide, including in rural Oregon.
- Dedicating lottery funding to Outdoor School programs might reduce the lottery funding available for other school needs, such as maintenance.
- The initiative process is not the appropriate way to allocate funding for programs, because voters are unlikely to understand all the trade-offs.
- Measure 99 would complicate the legislature's job of balancing the state budget and setting priorities for state expenditures. The legislature should determine how to use available funding for the state's needs.

How LWV of Oregon Researched the Ballot Measures

League of Women Voters members have researched and written these ballot measure reports. Researchers try to verify all factual information. We work diligently to ensure that our reports are balanced, accurate, and fair. We strive to provide the information you need to make an informed VOTE! Our sources include:

- Financial Impact and Explanatory Statements from the Secretary of State
- Measure supporters and opponents
- State agencies and economists
- Reports and published information, including current press coverage