



Oregon REALTORS® Pass Ballot Measure 79 and Stop Unfair, Double Taxes

The 2012 election cycle resulted in a resounding victory for the Oregon Association of REALTORS® (OAR) as voters supported the passage of Ballot Measure 79 to prohibit real estate transfer taxes. The vote was the culmination of a two-year campaign with the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® that began by collecting 164,000 signatures to qualify the issue for the ballot.

The OAR's Director of Public Policy Paul Rainey says: "We always knew there was a path to victory, although we thought it would be very close and within the polling margins!"

Despite a difficult political atmosphere, Rainey notes that research showed a path to victory through a strong education campaign. "In the end, Measure 79 passed with 59 percent of the vote and was supported in 35 out of 36 counties throughout the state. This impressive victory featured a strong REALTOR® mobilization effort and a targeted campaign that personalized the messages necessary to illustrate the negative impact a real estate transfer tax would have on homeowners, Rainey explains.

Shaun Jillions, OAR's Vice President of Public Policy, continues: "Our members really stepped up to the plate." They were responding to a very real threat to their industry. Already, in 2010, to increase the state's revenue, Oregon voters had approved controversial tax increases on corporations and wealthier individuals. OAR knows that real estate transactions are a likely target for lawmakers looking for additional revenue sources. It also knows that, especially in the current economy, even a tax of a seemingly modest percentage could prevent many Oregonians, particularly first-time buyers, from achieving home ownership. The success in November means the ban becomes part of the state's constitution, and is only reversible by another direct vote.

Prior to launching the signature campaign, a membership survey determined that 91 percent of Oregon's REALTORS® were opposed to a real estate transfer tax. "Here in Oregon, we can't get 91 percent agreement on whether the sky is blue," laughs Jillions. The survey went on to ask if members would be willing to spend significant resources to support the measure: a whopping 77 percent said "Yes." The board of directors' decision to move forward was nearly unanimous, and its leadership and momentum drove the signature campaign over the top, says Jillions.

And NAR was there to help, with significant funds, resources, and support granted via the Issues Mobilization program, amounting to \$3.2 million. The campaign included polling, as well as an interactive website to both educate and engage the public on the issue of real estate transfer taxes.

A coalition including the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregonians in Action, and the Taxpayers Association of Oregon supported OAR by sending mailers to their membership lists seeking member-and-spouse signatures. Jillions notes, "We asked our own 12,000 members not only for their own signatures, but to fill multi-line sheets with as many as they could collect." This direct, grass-roots signature collection method proved to be of such high quality, that it saved the campaign time and money in the grueling sampling and verification process.

For the November campaign, the association conducted a massive public awareness campaign, leading up to the vote. Jillions says: "This campaign has really been part of an ongoing partnership



between our organization and the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®. “We’ve worked with their Issues Mobilization committee a number of times before. Not only are the funds that they’ve provided and pledged hugely important, but the help they’ve given us in terms of services and consultants has been invaluable. They’re terrific partners – always easy to work with, and thoughtful and responsive.”

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