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EDITORIAL: TABOR and taxes (<http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/opinion/22862869-47/story.csp>) |

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As columnist E.J. Dionne explains on the opposite page, voters in Washington state and Maine last week rejected Taxpayer Bill of Rights measures limiting the growth of state spending. The result could be a sign of what's to come in Oregon when voters decide the fate of two tax measures next January.

Oregonians defeated a Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR, proposal in 2006: Measure 48, which would have capped growth of state spending to a rate equal to population growth plus inflation. The measure failed by a ratio of 29-71. Tuesday's vote in Maine was closer, 40-60, and closer yet in Washington, 43-57. But none of the states needed a recount. Voters in all three had learned from the example of Colorado, where over the course of a decade a TABOR measure had damaged higher education, transportation and other state services.

The results belie the notion of a generalized anti-government backlash. More likely, whatever backlash exists comes in response to specific government actions, and is not aimed at all levels of government. In Maine and Washington, and earlier in Oregon, voters showed that they value state services and are willing — grudgingly, perhaps — to pay for them.

That's a good sign for Oregon Measures 66 and 67, referred by petition to a public vote on Jan. 26. The measures would raise income tax rates paid by upper-income Oregonians, and impose higher taxes on Oregon businesses. The two measures would raise \$733 million for the current biennium. Without the revenue, the Legislature will go to Salem in February for a round of cuts in budgets for schools, social services, public safety and other programs.

It's hard to ask anyone to pay higher taxes in the midst of a recession. But it's also hard to cut public services at a time when greater numbers of people are depending on them. The defeat of the TABOR proposals suggests that Oregonians won't respond reflexively to Measures 66 and 67, but will balance the costs and benefits fairly.

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