



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Eugene Gas Tax Referendum Fails to Qualify for November Ballot

A referendum drive challenging Eugene's gas tax failed to gather enough valid signatures to qualify for a spot on the November ballot, City Recorder Mary Feldman announced today.

Several local gas station owners sought to challenge City of Eugene ordinance 20384, approved by the City Council on May 29 and increasing Eugene's local motor vehicle fuel tax to 8 cents per gallon and repealing a sunset provision that would have rolled Eugene's gas tax back to 3 cents per gallon in February 2008. On June 1, chief petitioners Casey Pilkenton, Tim Reed and John Anderson filed a prospective petition with the City to refer this ordinance to Eugene voters. For the petition to succeed, the petitioners were required to submit 6,365 signatures of registered Eugene voters by 5 p.m. on June 29.

On June 28, the petitioners filed 1,277 signature sheets containing nearly 11,000 signatures. As required by state law, the city recorder reviewed the petitions to confirm that each sheet had sufficient circulator certification. Only those petitions meeting circulator certification requirements may be forwarded to Lane County Elections for signature verification. Fifty petition sheets containing 437 signatures failed this test.

County elections divisions in Oregon have the responsibility of maintaining voter registration records and cities arrange with county elections officials for verification of signatures. Oregon Administrative Rules require that for petitions requiring more than 4,500 signatures, a statistical sampling process is used to determine the petition's sufficiency. That process uses a mathematical sampling formula and random number generator program to determine how many valid signatures are required and how they are selected from the petition sheets. On July 2, the gas tax referendum petitions were submitted to Lane County Elections, which had until 5 p.m. on the 15th day following the petitioners' filing to complete the verification process.

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In the first sampling by Lane County Elections, 10% of the total signatures submitted for verification, or 1,043 signatures, were examined. That sample required 637 valid signatures for the petition to be accepted. Lane County Elections determined that only 561 signatures qualified, so a second sampling was required under state law. The second sample required 1,044 signatures to be verified and 718 of them to be valid. Late this afternoon, Lane County Elections notified Eugene's city recorder that the second sampling contained only 571 valid signatures and that the petition had failed to qualify for the ballot.

At this point, the chief petitioners have the option to file a prospective initiative petition to propose legislation on the gas tax for voters to approve or reject. A total of 9,548 valid signatures are required to place an initiative on the ballot in Eugene.

According to Public Works spokesman Eric Jones, the determination by election officials means the gas tax ordinance will be implemented as directed by Council, and the City will arrange with the Oregon Department of Transportation to begin collecting the local motor vehicle fuel tax at 8 cents per gallon at Eugene gas stations beginning August 1.

"The motor vehicle fuel tax is one component of a package of solutions adopted by the City Council that will collectively provide an ongoing, adequate, locally-controlled revenue stream to meet Eugene's transportation funding needs," Jones said. Eugene's pavement preservation program is funded primarily by the local motor vehicle fuel tax. Since the gas tax first was established in 2003, almost 125 lane miles on more than 75 streets will have been repaired through Eugene's pavement preservation program, Jones said.

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