

Ballot Measure 116: State Compensation Commission

OFFICIAL TITLE: Amends Constitution: Establishes “Independent Public Service Compensation Commission” to determine salaries for specified officials, eliminates legislative authority to set such salaries

REFERRAL: This measure is a constitutional amendment referred to the voters by the 2023 Oregon Legislature with a vote of 47 in favor, 3 against, and 10 excused in the House, and a vote of 21 in favor, 4 against, and 5 absent in the Senate.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: There is no direct financial impact on state or local revenues. Costs related to the measure are indeterminate at this time. Once the Commission is in service, it will determine salaries to be paid to certain public officials. Once approved, these salaries will come from the General Fund.

PROBABLE RESULT OF YES VOTE: The Commission will be created and funded, and individual Commission members will be appointed. The Commission’s work will determine appropriate and equitable salaries for the individual positions assigned.

PROBABLE RESULT OF NO VOTE: The Commission will not be created and the current salary setting processes will be used.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon law requires each county to appoint a compensation board to recommend salaries for various officials. There is currently no similar requirement for the state to do so. The Legislature established an Oregon Public Officials Compensation Commission via legislation in 1983. The seats became vacant in 2000. The Commission was revitalized in 2007 by appointing new members and a revised scope of work. The Commission was unfunded starting in 2008 during the recession and was eliminated in 2017. During the 2023 Legislative Session, Senate Joint Resolution 34 proposed an

amendment to establish the Independent Public Service Compensation Commission.

The previous Public Officials Compensation Commission was permitted to recommend salaries but not to determine them. Further, there was no rule prohibiting persons connected to those officials or employees under salary review from serving on the commission.

During the process to establish a new Commission, the House Committee of Rules noted that The National Conference on State Legislatures (NCSL) reports that 21 states set compensation or receive input from independent commissions on salaries. This study by NCSL surveyed salaries paid in 2022. At that time the Oregon governor earned \$98,600, which was the fourth lowest in the United States. The salary for the Attorney General was the lowest in the country, and the salary for the Treasurer is the second lowest in the country.

PROPOSAL:

This referral establishes the “Independent Public Service Compensation Commission (IPSCC). If approved by voters, this commission will have the authority to determine salaries for identified individuals including the Governor, Treasurer, Attorney General, Commissioner of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), supreme court judges, other government judicial branch judges, state senators, state representatives, and district attorneys.

It also establishes that any officer or employee of the State of Oregon, registered lobbyists, or an immediate family member of an individual of these classes are prohibited from serving on the Commission.

If the measure passes, it is assumed it will be under a yet-to-be-designated state agency, which will be funded by the Legislature.

SUPPORTERS SAY:

- Oregon needs salary decisions independent of political pressures.
- This measure removes decision-making authority over salaries from the beneficiaries of those decisions.

- We need to set salaries for our elected officials that reflect the responsibilities of the job.
- The measure allows a commission to consider the concern that some Oregon residents, who have average or lower incomes or resources, are not financially able to serve in a legislative position requiring extensive time commitments.

OPPONENTS SAY:

- There is no organized opposition to this measure.