

## Summary Evaluation of the 2010 Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review

John Gastil & Katie Knobloch, January 26, 2011\*

From April-December, 2010, our team of researchers studied the legislatively-authorized pilot of the Citizens' Initiative Review (HB 2895, adopted in 2009). Pursuant to HB 2895, our purpose was to determine the quality of deliberation that took place during the review process itself, as well as the utility of the resultant Citizens' Statements published in the statewide Voters' Pamphlet. By both of these metrics, the 2010 pilot of the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) received high marks.

Our research method included direct observation of the CIR panels; interviews with the panelists themselves; examination of full transcripts of the CIR panels; assessment of the Citizens' Statements, and analysis of large statewide surveys. Based on this research, our primary findings are as follows.

### 1. The two CIR panels convened in August 2010 engaged in high-quality deliberation.

- **The panels conducted a rigorous analysis of the issues and maintained a fair and respectful discussion of the issues throughout the proceedings.**
- **The Citizens' Statements included in the Voters Pamphlet were thoroughly vetted by the panelists and were free of any gross factual errors or logical mistakes.**

### 2. The CIR Citizens' Statements were widely used and helpful to a large percentage of voters.

- **A majority of Oregon voters who read the Citizens' Statements (65% of M73 voters and 57% of M74 voters) found the Statements to be helpful and gained new information or arguments; those voters who read the Statements became more knowledgeable about the measures.**
- **Voters reported spending considerably more time reading the Citizens' Statements compared to other parts of the voter's pamphlet.**
- **Voters who carefully read the Citizens' Statements were much less likely to support M73 and M74. The net result was narrowing the margin of passage for M73 and increasing the opposition to M74 from a small to a larger majority of voters.**

The principle investigator on this study was John Gastil, a professor in communication and political science at the University of Washington (UW). He has published five scholarly books and dozens of articles on democracy and group behavior, and he has helped lead four other NSF-funded projects during the past seven years. The project's graduate research assistant was Katherine Knobloch, a UW Ph.D. student in communication. Other collaborators included Professor Mark Henkels of the Public Policy and Administration and Political Science Departments at Western Oregon University, Associate Professor of political science Katherine Cramer Walsh at University of Wisconsin-Madison, and UW communication Ph.D. candidate Justin Reedy.

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\* This is a summary of the report by the same authors, "Evaluation Report to the Oregon State Legislature on the 2010 Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review" (December, 2010).