

Panelist Report to the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review Commission

On April 1, 2015, four panelists from the two Citizens' Initiative Reviews (CIRs) conducted in 2014 convened to evaluate CIR procedures. The panelists were Debby Southworth and Richard Beamish, who reviewed measure 90, and Ernest Estes and Al Medley, who reviewed Measure 92. The evaluation was facilitated by Lucy Greenfield, Public Affairs Director of Healthy Democracy, on behalf of the CIR Commission. CIRC Administrator Sarah Giles and CIR Commissioners Ann Bakkensen and Kay Ogden were also present.

Panelists made suggestions about several areas of the CIR process. Healthy Democracy is engaging in a thorough review of 2014 CIR events, and will be combining this feedback with feedback from the independent research team, moderators, advocates, and leaders in other states that piloted the Citizens' Initiative Review to suggest possible changes to the CIR process.

A summary of the evaluation by panelists, including recommendations, can be found below:

Strengths and weaknesses of the process

- Panelists expressed that they appreciated having the chance to serve on a review, and mentioned having more hope for our political discourse after meeting with a diverse group for a civilized discussion of a contentious issue.
- Panelists universally praised the moderators who facilitated the reviews, noting that they were able to keep panelists on track and guide the process.
- Panelists had questions about the orientation portion of the process (see recommendations below).
- Multiple panelists would have appreciated more time for the review process overall.
- Panelists noted that at times advocates for and against the measure were not able to come to agreement about a key factual question, and in these cases it was difficult for panelists to ascertain which information to trust.
- Panelists felt that the final process of editing claims for the voters' pamphlet sometimes delved into minutia rather than the key issues, and that a clearer roadmap would have helped guide this process.

Recommendations

- Provide more information to panelists before the reviews begin (examples: a sample Citizens' Statement, an introduction to how the panel would review, modify, and create claims, a statement about the role of advocate panels, and a schedule).
- Consider shortening the orientation portion of the process, but only if it is still possible to give all panelists (including those from diverse backgrounds and with varying educational experiences) a solid grounding in the process.
- Find ways to encourage more panelists to ask questions during the advocate sessions.

- Increase clarity about the schedule and process of the review to provide a roadmap for panelists.
- Consider changing the language that accompanies the vote tally. “Position taken by X panelists” can imply that all panelists voting for the position agreed with all the arguments in the section.
- Consider increasing the length of the reviews, but balance the need for additional time with the need to bring together a diverse group including a significant cohort of working Oregonians.