November 3, 2026 General Election

Jackson County, Oregon

Referred to the People by the City of Ashland

Measure: 15-243

Caption: Requiring Voter Approval for New or Increased Fee or Tax.

Question: Should Ashland's Charter be amended to require voter approval of a City of Ashland Utility Bill Fee or Tax?

Summary: A "Yes" vote amends the Ashland Charter, Article IX, Special Powers of the Council, as follows:
Section 8: Fees and Taxes: The City Council may propose new fees, taxes, or increase existing fees or taxes on a utility bill unrelated to the operation of the utilities. Notwithstanding any other provision, no such fee, tax, or increase, will be assessed, imposed, or collected on a utility bill until at least thirty (30) days following a positive vote to affirm by Ashland voters at the next regularly scheduled election. State and Federal taxes and fees are exempt. Franchise fees, increases to comply with State set minimums, and increases adjusting for inflation not exceeding the CPI-west, are exempt.

This citizen-initiated measure would require voter approval before the City can implement new or increased utility bill fees or taxes unrelated to utility operations. The measure could delay, affect the timing and/or provision of City services. The practical or financial impacts of delays have not been evaluated or detailed.

A "No" vote retains current Ashland Charter language.

Explanatory Statement:

This measure would amend the Ashland City Charter to require voter approval before the City may impose new fees or taxes, or increase existing fees or taxes, on a City utility bill. Under current Charter language, the Ashland City Council may adopt new fees or taxes, or increase existing ones, and place them on residents' utility bills without a public vote.

The measure would not apply to state or federal taxes and fees. It also does not apply to franchise fees, increases necessary to comply with state-required minimums, fees related to the operation of the utility themselves, or increases for inflation that do not exceed the Consumer Price Index for the western United States (CPI-West).

If approved, this measure would require that any such new or increased utility bill fee or tax first be approved by Ashland voters at the next regularly scheduled election before it

could be assessed, imposed, or collected. Once voters affirm the fee or tax, the City would be required to wait at least thirty (30) days following that vote before it could take effect.

The measure would change the City's existing authority by adding a voter-approval requirement for the specified fees and taxes. Currently, the Ashland Charter does not contain this proposed requirement.

Requiring voter approval could affect the timing of City revenue and services when a proposed fee or tax requires voter approval. Because approval could occur only at a regularly scheduled election, implementation of a proposed fee or tax could be delayed until after an election and the required 30-day period. Depending on the circumstances, such delays could affect the timing or provision of City services that rely on such revenue.

The measure does not itself establish a new fee or tax, increase an existing fee or tax, or identify a particular City service or program that would be funded by a fee or tax. Any future fee or tax subject to the measure would require separate action by the City Council and, under the proposed Charter amendment, voter approval.

The measure could delay, affect the timing and/or provision of City services. The practical or financial impacts of delays have not been evaluated or detailed.

A **Yes** vote would amend the Ashland Charter to require voter approval of specified new or increased utility-bill fees or taxes before they could be implemented.

A **No** vote would leave the current Ashland Charter language unchanged.

(*This information furnished by the City of Ashland.*)