



# The Citizens' Initiative Review

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Citizens' Initiative Review is to provide a clear, trustworthy and balanced evaluation of initiatives or referenda on the statewide ballot.

## **Method**

The review of ballot initiatives will be conducted by citizen panels, using methods tested and refined in several states over the past thirty years. Each panel will consist of 24 people selected at random. Additional sampling techniques will be used to ensure that the resulting panel is representative of Oregon's voting population in terms of age, education, place of residence and political affiliation (gender and race will be included if state law allows). A separate citizen panel will evaluate each initiative on the ballot.

Over five consecutive days, panelists will hear from initiative proponents and opponents. Panelists will question the witnesses, deliberate among themselves and reach their own conclusions about the proposed initiative. The hearings are facilitated by a staff carefully trained to ensure fairness to all parties. The panelists will then determine whether they support or oppose the initiative, along with their reasons why. The panel's conclusions, including how many of them support the measure and how many oppose it, will be summarized on a single page in the Voter's Pamphlet and made widely available to the public.

## **Long Term Goal**

Healthy Democracy Oregon's long term goal is to have the Citizens Initiative Review (CIR) conducted as part of each general election. The CIR would be administered by an independent entity within state government, overseen by a board of commissioners, half of whom would be chosen from among those who have served on previous citizen panels. Each initiative that appears on the statewide ballot would be reviewed by a separate panel, and each panel's conclusions would appear in the Voter's Pamphlet.

## **Demonstration Project**

The purpose of the September 2008 demonstration CIR is to give Oregonians the opportunity to evaluate the process for themselves, and to determine whether they want the CIR to become an official part of the initiative process.

## **Where Does the CIR Come From?**

The CIR is based upon the Citizens Jury method developed by the Jefferson Center, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization based in Minnesota. Since the mid-1970s, the Jefferson Center has conducted Citizens Juries on a wide range of issues – including water quality, health care reform, and the federal budget. In the early 1990s, The League of Women Voters teamed up with the Jefferson Center to conduct projects in Minnesota and Pennsylvania to evaluate candidate's stands on issues (see [www.jefferson-center.org](http://www.jefferson-center.org)). William Raspberry of the Washington Post wrote that "The Citizens Jury ...is a paragon of representative democracy". The Philadelphia Inquirer said it "was a portrait of democracy the way democracy is supposed to be."

The principle backers of the CIR in Oregon are Ned Crosby, founder of the Jefferson Center, and his wife, Patricia Benn. In early 2006, Tyrone Reitman and Elliot Shuford – colleagues from the University of Oregon's Public Policy Master's Program – approached Crosby and Benn about the possibility of collaborating on such a project. Reitman and Shuford, concerned about the quality of information in ballot measure campaigns, set out to improve Oregon's initiative process by developing the CIR with Crosby and Benn's help.