

A SURE SIGN DEMOCRATS MUST IMPOSE A SPENDING FREEZE

Who'd a thunk it? When given a choice, voters are happy to impose higher taxes on those who have been getting rich while everyone else faces higher costs and stagnant wages.

Yesterday Oregon voters delivered a huge victory for progressives by approving Measures 66 and 67, raising taxes on incomes over \$250,000 and large corporations to generate \$733 million to close the state's budget deficit. The Oregon legislature had approved the taxes last summer, but a corporate/teabagger alliance organized to put it to voters in a referendum.

One wonders if the national media will cover this victory at all – much less at the levels of the Massachusetts Senate race.

[snip]

The opposition ran a well-funded campaign, led by Nike, Columbia Sportswear, and other big businesses. They were joined by Ari Fleischer's FreedomWorks and the libertarian publisher of the Oregonian, who used to be at the Orange County Register before it went belly-up. Together they ran a campaign arguing that the tax increases would worsen unemployment. But 55% of voters have rejected that, and instead showed that when a truly progressive campaign is waged, the right-wingers can be beaten. Even on taxes.

What it also shows is that progressive policies, supported by smart progressive

organizing led by folks such as former US Senate candidate Steve Novick and the Oregon Bus Project, which reached out to younger voters and had a strong ground game, can beat well-funded, well-organized corporate/teabagger alliances.

Their message was deeply progressive:

These reforms protect nearly \$1 billion in vital services like education, health care and public safety. These funds preserve class sizes, save jobs for teachers, provide seniors with in-home care, and provide health care for thousands of Oregonians through the Oregon Health Plan. In this time of economic crisis, we must protect those who have been hit the hardest – seniors, children and the unemployed – without putting more of a burden on the middle class.

Like Cruickshank, I'm not holding my breath for Cokie Roberts and George Will and Chris Matthews to drone on about how this is a game-changer. But it really must be read as the book-end to the MA Senate vote. Progressive messaging and policies do work. If only national Democrats can muster some progressive politics and messaging.