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Ballot Measure Resolution

Ballot Measure 26-32: Multnomah County Library Five-Year Levy

City Club Resolution "YES" on 26-32

"Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where to find information upon it." Dr. Samuel Johnson, April 18, 1775

Recognizing the great importance of the Multnomah County Library as a free educational and cultural resource available to all adults and children of the county, the City Club of Portland has studied and supported Library levies on four separate occasions (1976, 1984, 1986 (as part of an extensive study of the Library), and 1987). The following resolution includes a summary of the reports of these studies updated to current conditions.

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners for Multnomah County passed Resolution No. 02-022, referring *A Five-year Rate Based Local Option Levy to Continue Library Services* (Measure 26-32) to the May 21, 2002 ballot;

WHEREAS, the unpredictable negative impact of property tax relief legislation has impelled the County to replace the final year of the 1997 library levy (59.97 cents per \$1000 assessed value) with this proposed levy to avoid a significant cut in library services in 2002;

WHEREAS, Measure 26-32 seeks to maintain the current level of Library service through 2007;

WHEREAS, Measure 26-32 will levy \$77.5 cents per \$1000 of assessed value, to produce an estimated \$139.5 million over five years, averaging \$27.9 million per year, and costing the average homeowner \$95.00 per year, or \$8.00 per month (based on the average assessed value of all homes in Multnomah County);

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WHEREAS, Measure 26-32 adds \$20.00 to the yearly tax bill of the average County homeowner compared to the current Library levy;

WHEREAS, the Library is critically dependent on levy money—more than half of its budget comes from this source;

WHEREAS, the Library provides educational and cultural resources to the majority of County residents; and 77 percent of adults and children in Multnomah County hold Library cards;

WHEREAS, Library users check out an average of 21 items each year—a relatively high rate compared to the ten library systems of comparable size in the country;

WHEREAS, Library materials are checked out an average of seven times each year—the highest rate of use among the ten comparable library systems;

WHEREAS, the Library is the major provider of computer and digital information resources to roughly half of the county residents who do not own a computer;

WHEREAS, the Library is a major provider of information needed for the formation and maintenance of businesses and for career planning;

WHEREAS, the total County Library support including this measure will amount to about four percent of the total county budget; and

WHEREAS, although, City Club taxation studies have found that the property tax is undesirably regressive and properties are now inequitably assessed because of 1997 Measure 50, fundamental tax reform is not being considered at this time, and no realistic alternative exists to raise needed revenue for Library services;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED given the ongoing need to maintain library services that well serve our community, and following City Club's support of past levies to meet those needs, that the City Club Board of Governors publicly expresses the City Club's support for Measure 26-32 on the May 21, 2002 ballot.