

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Is Jackson County Commissioner a partisan position?

Currently, it is a partisan position, although, twenty-nine of Oregon's thirty-six counties have already changed to non-partisan positions, including Douglas, Klamath, Josephine, and Deschutes Counties. In Jackson County, every other elected office is elected on a nonpartisan ballot – Assessor, County Clerk, District Attorney, Justice of the Peace, Sheriff, and Surveyor.

What problems are the Measures intended to solve?

Lack of representation for a majority of our citizens, whether you look at place of residence, demographics (e.g., age or ethnicity) or party (non)affiliation. Inadequate control and leadership of the sprawling bureaucracy. Questionable financial management and delivery of services – the county may look good on paper, but the commissioners owe citizens major expensive projects that have been kept “off the books,” such as an adequate jail, courthouse and animal shelter. When the libraries were “spun off” with a voter-approved tax base, the county no longer had to spend even a penny on library services. Money saved was then put into reserves. The county tax base did not drop by even a penny. As a result, taxpayers paid the same for county services PLUS more for the libraries, making the county appear to be financially well-off while pushing more costs to the taxpayers. A board of three has continually proven incapable of providing timely action on pressing issues, and their salaries, benefits and perks are out of control.

Will the Measures lead to bigger government?

No. Increasing the board to five commissioners will not lead to bigger government. We already have “big government” with a county budget potentially exceeding \$700,000,000 by 2027 when five are first sworn in. Five commissioners will be better supervisors of the sprawling county bureaucracy, providing more accountability and responsiveness to county residents. Having five commissioners does not need to be costly if voters select responsible representatives to make sensible choices about whether they need things like lavish offices and travel allowances, or \$5,000 slush funds for “community promotion.” Any costs will be miniscule compared to a \$700,000,000 budget.

Why shouldn't I believe the county administrator's claims that implementing the Measures will be costly?

The county administrator used hypothetical budgets, not known provable facts, to create a speculative overpriced scenario which he acknowledged “can be discounted... Anyone can argue those numbers. You can try to knock some things out or not.”

Budgets for commissioners are always overstated, recently by as much as 24.5% percent by our county administrator. We have identified numerous “costs” included by the administrator, like paying \$50,000 to the Association of Oregon Counties or renovating the auditorium, which are simply baseless. After reducing the padded expenses and removing unnecessary ones, implementing the Measures would have minimal cost and could actually result in cost-savings.

How can we nail down what it will cost to implement the Measures?

That process is already underway and allows voters and taxpayers to have meaningful input. Measure 15-226 will set a standard of reasonableness. The County Compensation Board has three cycles to transition to the voters' will before five Commissioners are sworn in. The 2026 election will reveal those candidates who commit to honor the will of the voters, make practical choices to cut lavish benefits, and avoid frivolous projects like renovating the auditorium for three days of budget hearings.

Will the Measures decrease transparency?

No. Many citizens perceive, or experience first-hand, that the county government currently is extremely secretive. Consider how the commissioners have been quietly increasing their own salaries year after year. The minutes and report of the 2023 County Compensation Board are not available to the public without a formal records request and payment of \$9. The three-citizen board met with the commissioners and administrator and rubber-stamped increases worked up by staff. There was no meaningful deliberation. The administrator then passed out the proposed salary-setting Order to these same six people sitting as the Budget Committee. They sat silently reading the document, said “yep,” and that was that. Zero disclosure to the public about what was actually going on and being approved.

Have these Measures been turned down before?

No, this May is the first opportunity ever for voters to have their say in Jackson County. The concepts have been studied and developed for decades, however, by organizations like the League of Women Voters.

Who is paying for the JCFA initiatives?

JCFA is an all-volunteer nonpartisan grassroots group of citizens from throughout Jackson County. No corporate or PAC money is involved. JCFA is funded exclusively by small donations from people like you.

Why don't the Measures cut the county up into districts?

Managing three separate petitions was already a huge job for our all-volunteer grassroots organization. These three petitions presented clear, sensible improvements to the outdated status quo. The reactions from voters asked to sign told us we made the right decisions.

Will adding two commissioners make it harder to get the county's work done?

No. The current three commissioners are constantly scrambling to cover meetings, and clearly have no time left to get to know the entire Jackson County community. When did a commissioner last hold a town hall in your neighborhood? Adding two commissioners will not only add more representation and accessibility, but will also increase productivity, efficiency, and services provided.

What is this controversy about quorum rules?

JCFA expects commissioners to comply with the Public Meetings Law, whether there are three or five on the board. With only three commissioners, any two constitute a quorum and thus a public meeting if they “deliberate” in any way. With five, productive communications as permitted by the Public Meetings Law can occur between two commissioners and lead to better information-sharing and decision-making.

Is JCFA disenfranchising voters by putting the Measures on the May ballot?

No. There is usually nothing important on May ballots for non-affiliated and minor party voters. This year is different. Every single voter has a compelling reason to return their ballot. It's not just about having a reason to vote – it's a matter of fairness. Citizens who don't want to be branded by either major party

should have equal opportunity to cast votes and to run as candidates.
Measure 15-224 creates a level playing field FOR ALL OF US.

If candidates for commissioner have to identify with a political party, it's easier for voters to choose.

Voters are competent to choose all other county posts which are nonpartisan, like the sheriff, district attorney and clerk. Indeed, all municipal and board positions for schools, transportation, fire districts, etc., are nonpartisan too. Good candidates will get out and inform the electorate of their policies and principles; good candidates don't need to hide behind partisan labels. Neither voters nor candidates should be forced to be "branded" in order to participate under the same rules.

If the position is nonpartisan, how can voters know where a candidate stands?

This is not a problem in this day of Internet outreach, social media, online news, plus all the traditional media outlets. Each candidate will have a website - read it, and ask any questions that haven't been answered. Plus, all voters receive the Voters Pamphlet containing candidate statements.

Are the salaries of Jackson County's commissioners truly the highest in the state?

Yes, and they concede that fact. In fact, they knew their salaries already exceeded the mean of comparable counties by 26.54% before they raised their salaries last time. Here is their worksheet:

The county administrator says that, factoring in inflation, commissioner salaries today are essentially the same as set in 2008. What's wrong with that?

The administrator used a hypothetical which he admitted does not fit actual experience. He didn't use the documented, provable facts. His numbers don't match what was given to JCFA under a public records request after three months of legal wrangling and a petition to the district attorney:

Will Measure 15-226 get tied up in litigation and end up overturned in court?

There should be no conflict between the will of the voters and what the five commissioners they choose expect to be paid. Courts do not issue advisory opinions. No conflict means no lawsuit. Let Jackson County be an example of how citizens can spark change without getting the courts involved.

Commissioner Dyer accuses JCFA volunteers of lying to voters about Measure 15-226, to trick them into signing petitions. What is JCFA's response?

On behalf of our volunteers we reject that accusation. The title of Measure 15-226 was written by the district attorney, not JCFA, and appeared immediately above where voters signed:

Decrease the Salaries of Jackson County Commissioners

We trust voters understand this simple statement. Dyer's beef is that we don't agree with his speculative, inflated view of overall costs. As explained above, it's up to voters, candidates and ultimately five duly-elected Commissioners whether the Measures carry any material costs.

How did the county commissioners and administrator break Oregon Elections Laws?

After July 28, 2023, when JCFA filed prospective initiative petitions, the law forbade any person to direct or coerce a county employee to do work on the clock to discourage signatures or oppose the initiatives. The law further forbade the county administrator from opposing signatures or the initiatives themselves. He could disseminate only neutral facts. He instead directed county staff to develop speculative and overblown pro formas and conceptual designs, and then unveiled these at a one-sided, hostile public meeting designed to get only the advocacy of the commissioners and administrator on the front page.