

Mark Nelson is the chief lobbyist running the opposition to Measures 66 and 67. He's been referred to as "the most powerful lobbyist" in Salem.

Nelson is a lobbyist for tobacco companies and other large corporations.

In 1993, Nelson and Pat McCormick (spokesman for Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes) orchestrated a measure to impose a 5 percent sales tax on Oregonians.

"Political consultants Mark Nelson and Pat McCormick played the key behind-the-scenes roles in shaping the sales tax that will be on the November ballot. Now, it looks like they've grabbed the job of trying to sell it to the public. In most campaigns, you have clients in search of consultants to help them win an election. In this case, you almost have the reverse. Nelson -- who is also a well-connected Salem lobbyist and pollster -- has for several months held regular meetings with several interest groups that have supported a sales tax. The idea was to coordinate strategy for keeping steady pressure on legislators to get the 'right kind' of tax plan out of the House and Senate. McCormick, who also has several lobbying clients, regularly met with House Revenue Chairwoman Delna Jones to offer advice on what kind of sales tax would be most palatable both to the public and to the business community." (*Oregonian*, August 8, 1993)

Despite the impossible odds of winning a sales tax campaign Nelson and McCormick insisted they weren't just in it for the money.

"But McCormick and Nelson say they aren't trying to milk a campaign that is destined to fail. Instead, both say they're looking out for several clients that desperately need more government revenue. For example, Nelson's clients include college teachers, public defenders and social workers. McCormick represents the Beaverton School District and several electronics companies that have a keen interest in higher education." (*Oregonian*, August 8, 1993)

Nelson may have used the sales tax to protect large property tax breaks for corporations.

"In Oregon, Fair Share is trying to put a measure on the November ballot that would preserve the Measure 5 breaks for homeowners while basically removing the property-tax deductions for all commercial property (including rentals and second homes)...Salem lobbyist Mark Nelson, who has been hired by Associated Oregon Industries to fight the Fair Share initiative, argues that [Gov. Barbara] Roberts can't afford to craft a plan that alienates a major interest group. Getting Oregonians to accept any tax increase is going to be hard enough, he says. Nelson instead has been shopping around the idea of a

5 percent sales tax that would automatically come up for another vote in three to four years. He also argues that the tax plan, on goods only, could be balanced between business and consumers by using some of the sales-tax money to lower personal-income taxes.” (*Oregonian*, June 14, 1992)

In 2000, Nelson led a campaign to raise the gas tax.

“Backers of a nickel-a-gallon gasoline tax hike on the May 16 ballot have conceded defeat, saying that high gas prices and 'outrageous' advertising by opponents had made it impossible to persuade Oregonians to endorse the increase. 'The numbers are very difficult. We're going to lose,' said Mark Nelson, a Salem pollster and manager of the Fair Funding for Better Roads, a coalition of trucking interests, businesses, local governments and others backing Measure 82...Aside from increasing the gas tax, the plan would raise vehicle registration fees and repeal the weight-mile tax truckers now pay and replace it with a new diesel tax.” (Associated Press, April 13, 2000)

Nelson said that a 1% funding increase for state universities sent “a signal to Oregon college students that they’re not a high priority.”

“Advocates for the disabled, elderly and others who depend on state-sponsored social services are bracing for a tough budget fight when the 2001 Oregon Legislature convenes on Jan. 8. They fear that Gov. John Kitzhaber's new state budget bolstering big-ticket items like school funding and the Oregon Health Plan could leave less visible social aid programs in the dust...There's grumbling that a proposed 1 percent funding increase for state universities is too little - especially when compared to a proposed hike of about 10 percent in local school aid. 'He's sending a signal to Oregon college students [that] they're not a high priority,' said Mark Nelson, a Salem lobbyist representing the Oregon Association of Faculties.” (Associated Press, December 30, 2000)