

Court upholds ruling against Sizemore group

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SALEM --The Oregon Supreme Court on Thursday upheld a \$2.5 million judgment against a now-defunct organization controlled by conservative activist Bill Sizemore, finding that the group violated an anti-racketeering law in an attempt to undermine two unions that represent Oregon teachers.

In a unanimous decision, the high court affirmed lower court rulings that Sizemore associates forged signatures and submitted false financial reports as part of a scheme to qualify two initiatives on the 2000 ballot.

The initiatives were aimed at ending the practice of using payroll deductions to collect union dues if the union used any of the money for political purposes. Voters rejected both measures after an expensive opposition campaign by the unions, and Sizemore is pushing an almost identical initiative in November.

The \$2.5 million judgment was awarded to the Oregon Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, which sued a charitable trust and a political action committee controlled by Sizemore.

Sizemore has not been held personally liable for the award, and it is not clear whether the unions will receive any of the money. The charitable trust, which was liable for the \$2.5 million judgment, was dissolved by the courts earlier in the case.

Greg Hartman, a lawyer for OEA, said the union's next step will be to ask the courts to hold Sizemore personally liable for the judgment, extending a protracted legal battle that began in 2000.

"They're welcome to it," Sizemore said. "I'm ready for the fight."

--Edward Walsh

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