



Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee,

Multnomah County supports the proposed amendment to HB 2198

Oregon is well known for its innovative Vote by Mail elections. The proposed amendment to HB 2198 would make Oregon's voter registration process equally innovative. This proposed statutory change would automatically register to vote anyone with a DMV record and an electronic signature who meets eligibility requirements.

Good for voters

Oregon's constitution provides for a voter registration deadline of the 21st day prior to the election. This currently gives eligible citizens no option to vote if they do not submit a registration card by that deadline. Each election Multnomah County Elections' staff talks to citizens who believed they had done everything necessary to register to vote on their last trip to DMV but the elections office never received a completed registration card. By automatically registering most DMV customers this proposal would significantly increase the chances that someone who wants to vote will have a ballot delivered to their house at election time.

Good for election administration

Paper voter registration forms are expensive to process. The forms must be cut down to a standard size, batched in groups for ease of processing and archiving, scanned into the voter registration system, duplicate checked against all other voter registration records to determine if the voter is already registered, the data must be manually entered into the registration system and then the data entry must be verified. Electronic registrations from the online registration system tied to DMV take one tenth of the time to process. Since there is no paper card and data entry is automated the registration clerks only need to run the duplicate check, verify that the address is correctly formatted and all data fields are complete.

Paper registrations and change of address forms from DMV currently account for up to 59% of all paper registrations processed by Multnomah County Elections annually. The amendment proposed to HB 2198 would require transfer of records from DMV to the Secretary of State and eventually to election offices electronically so it would reduce the cost of processing registrations and reduce the risk of data entry errors.

There would be some up front and ongoing costs to adding a significant number of voters to the rolls in Oregon but this kind of registration surge happens every presidential election cycle. In the registration surge associated with the 2012 Presidential election Multnomah County added 50,000 voters to the rolls. Providing accurate election and registration services to the citizens of Multnomah County is our mission no matter how many citizens register.

Multnomah County urges your support of the amendment proposed to HB 2198. It's good for voters and good for Oregon elections. It's the right thing to do.