



Jeff Cogen, Multnomah County Chair

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Chair Garrett and Members of the Committee,

HB 3521 is an innovative and long-overdue approach to modernizing voter registration for the 21st century. I strongly support the measure because it would remove a significant barrier to participation in democracy by providing automatic voter registration through DMV. And the measure would provide a more efficient system of voter registration that will save taxpayers' money in the long run.

Our paper-based voter registration system is outdated, expensive and inefficient. The current system depends on citizens gaining access to registration cards or third-party groups soliciting registration. Then, the system relies on elections staff entering hand-written information into the registration database. If everything goes right, it leads to a ballot in a voter's hands. When it goes wrong, and it occasionally does, it can lead to a disenfranchised voter.

Fortunately HB 3521 lays the groundwork for a more efficient system that takes advantage of modern technology. Transferring records electronically from the DMV to the County eliminates many of the current registration system's pitfalls while maintaining our registration system's security. The bill would free election workers of the need to process paper registration forms from DMV and enter data from the paper cards--freeing the system of the errors that can be introduced in that step.

We estimate HB 3521 would add about 90,000 registered voters to our current number of roughly 450,000 registered voters. As chair of the county with the most registered voters in Oregon, I understand additional costs will arise from having more registered voters. But the County would be proud to be partners with the State in reducing barriers and enabling greater participation in democracy. We believe the benefit is more than worth the modest cost. I urge your support of HB 3521.

Sincerely,

Multnomah County Chair Jeff Cogen