



Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

(971) 340-486

info@apano.org

www.apano.org

  @apanonews

Testimony in support of HB 3521

May 7, 2013, Victoria Demchak, Policy Coordinator
Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)

Thank you Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is Victoria Demchak and I'm with APANO, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon. We are a statewide community organization that works to ensure that Asians and Pacific Islanders are fully engaged in the social, economic and political issues that affect us.

We are in strong support of HB 3521.

All of our communities deserve to be engaged in the civic process, and we believe registering to vote should be a seamless, cost-effective process.

Asian and Pacific Islanders have made generations of contributions to Oregon's economy and society. Yet we face real barriers to civic participation, which has resulted in one of the lowest rates of voter registration due to language access, and a lack of experience with the democratic process as immigrant citizens.

Our communities understand the importance of transparent, democratic government and want to exercise their rights as citizens. A growing number of immigrant and refugee families in our community have fled political violence and oppression - and deeply understand that voting is a valuable privilege.

As they become new American citizens and become involved in all aspects of American life like starting small businesses and attending public schools, we need good government policies like HB 3521 that reduce isolation and increase integration.

But the current voter registration process is insufficient to engage the very people it seeks to serve.

- Of the 200,000 Asian and Pacific Islanders in Oregon, only 55% are registered compared to 71% of the general population
- When registered, our communities vote at nearly the same rate - 86% vs 90% for the general population.



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HB 3521 would reduce barriers to registration, make voter registration simple and understandable, and make sure that all eligible voters can vote. And In our communities, HB 3521 would

- build a culture of civic engagement, where participation is encouraged throughout our communities
- ensure eligible citizens vote by removing barriers and costly paperwork
- ensure our committees will be fully engaged in the political decisions that affect us

We urge you to support HB 3521

