

Submitted by the Urban League of Portland

May 8, 2013

Members of the House Rules Committee, the Urban League of Portland would like to share some thoughts as you consider a vote on HB 3521.

A third of Oregon's voting age citizens are not registered to vote and low-income people and people of color are among the most disenfranchised groups. HB 3521 moves Oregon closer to better engaging all of Oregon's unregistered and registered citizens.

The Urban League of Portland has seen firsthand the affects of an inefficient voter registration system. Currently, a growing housing instability for many of Oregon's African Americans threatens civic engagement. With so many foreclosures and people being kicked out of by landlords, the displacement African American population is high and it is important that we make it easier to keep people registered. Much of the North Portland African American population is being pushed into East County and voter mobilization outreach groups do not always go out there. This bill will help to counterbalance the negative effects that African American displacement will have on the registered population.

HB 3521 will make voter registration more efficient, accurate and accessible by automating state agency voter registration services, such as the DMV, the Department of Human Services, or the Department of Revenue and proactively registering those voters. It also automatically updates voter addresses whenever they change their address information with an Oregon agency.

Voter engagement efforts can be costly to both public agencies and community non profits. We have an opportunity to create long-term savings that could reduce the cost of elections by up to 1/3. A recent study from the Pew Center on the state found that Oregon spends \$9.7 million annually to register voters, on top of the money private organizations spend to register and re-register voters. We need to modernize our voter registration system and we urge you to support HB 3521 in helping get Oregon there.

Thank you for your time and consideration.