



March 18, 2013

House Rules Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97310

RE: Support 2738

Chair Garrett and members of the committee,

Precinct Committee Person (PCP) elections continue to be the most inefficient election process that County government is responsible for.

Some of the statewide statistics from the last PCP election in May, 2012

- **More than 17,000 positions were up for election statewide. At the end of the election only about 4,500 of those positions were filled leaving 12,632 vacant.**
- **More than 30,000 write-in votes were hand tallied. This led to 1,000 people with the required 3 votes to be elected. Of those 1,000, half chose to accept the position. The votes tallied for the half that didn't accept and the rest of the 34,000 write-ins that were tallied for people with one and two votes didn't lead to anyone being elected.**
- **Of the 17,000 positions statewide, there were 21 contested races. 21 races where more candidates filed than there were positions available. 21 PCP races where voters actually had to make a decision about who they were going to elect to the position.**

Clearly this process doesn't work for electing PCPs. The unfortunate thing is that the costs of these internal organizational elections for the major parties come from county general funds. All taxpayers pay for these elections whether they are a member of a major political party or not. The major political parties do not pay for the costs of these elections.

Additionally, the numbers above are not an anomaly. OACC has tracked these numbers in the last three primary elections and with minor fluctuations the numbers stay the same. Participation in PCP elections has not gotten any better.

Highlights of HB 2738 are:

- **Candidates for PCP still file with the Clerk's office at no charge, not later than the 70th day before the Primary election**
- **If more candidates file for a precinct than there are positions available in a precinct, the race will be placed on the ballot with all filed candidates and write-in lines.**
- **If an equal or fewer number of candidates file than positions available in a precinct, the filed candidates are declared elected and the race is not placed on the ballot.**
- **Any potential candidate who misses the filing deadline may still be appointed as a PCP at any meeting of the county party.**
- **Allows PCPs appointed at least 60 days prior to the organizational meeting to vote on the election of committee officers.**
- **The party would no longer be responsible for the cost of a recall election should one be necessary.**

- **Removes election of PCPs by gender (unconstitutional) but maintains representation by changing the proportion of PCPs to electors from 1 to 500 to 1 to 250.**

Benefits of HB 2738:

- **Because of the reduced number of PCP offices on the ballot, large counties may be able to place the contested races on the regular ballot to be tallied electronically with all other races. Currently because of programming restrictions in the tally system they are unable to do this.**
- **Elimination of tallying frivolous write-ins and write-ins where the candidate does not accept the office.**
- **More timely results feedback to the public.**
- **Elimination of at least 90% of the costs of PCP elections.**

You will likely hear arguments against this change. You will hear about vibrant precincts where there are always contested races. You will hear about the need for a democratic, government run process to avoid factions taking control of parties. You will hear about politicians that got their start in politics by getting three write-in votes and becoming a PCP. You will hear that this change will eliminate choice for the voter in choosing their PCPs.

The good news is that under this amendment there will still be vibrant precincts with contested PCP races on the ballot and a democratic, government run process. In those vibrant precincts there will still be write-in lines on the ballot for anyone to challenge one of the filed candidates. Voters with a desire to be a part of their local political party can still file for free, in person, by fax, or even by scanning and e-mailing their filing form. In almost every precinct in the state this guarantees that they will be elected. And if they miss the filing deadline and they still want to be a PCP they can go to their local party meeting and be appointed to one of the many likely vacant positions in their precinct or an adjacent one. And to the argument that somehow this change removes choice for the voter; if a race is not contested, then is there really a choice being made?

The modification of PCP elections is a simple solution for cost savings and efficiency in elections that has little or no impact on the way major parties do business. It is a change that is consistent with the goals and recommendations of the Government Efficiency Task Force from 2010 to find more efficient ways to run government processes.

The Oregon Association of County Clerks urges you to support HB 2738 to modify PCP elections.