

Testimony for HB2738

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I come here today to testify as the former chairperson of the Democratic Party of Washington County where I was chair for two terms, my second term ending at the reorganization meeting on November 10, 2012.

Specifically, I would like to testify in favor of the bill, Section 10, 248.035 (p5) which deals with the reorganization meeting of county central committees. Subsection "b" as amended deals with the election of county central committee officers and states "Only a newly elected precinct representative elected at the most recent primary election or a person appointed or selected at least 60 days prior to the date of the organizational meeting to fulfill a vacancy in the office of precinct representative may vote on the election of officers.

Committee members, the reasons behind this change are several:

1. Most party central committees in our state favor an open, inclusionary governing model where we encourage precinct representative participation at all levels. These levels might include infrastructure strengthening, running for public office, fundraising and the myriad of other activities that keep the county party vibrant and growing. In our party, appointed precinct reps are treated with the same respect and care as those elected in the May election. To do otherwise makes no sense from the point of view of a county central committee that wants to be welcoming to new members and reward those who are willing to do the work to grow the party. Denying appointed precinct reps the ability to vote on cc officers at the reorganization meeting every two years is counterintuitive to these principles. Particularly since it only takes 3 write in votes in the election to attain the status of elected precinct rep, and in many of those cases, we never hear or see those elected write in precinct reps.
2. Now there are those who will say that letting appointed precinct reps vote on officers opens the county party to the kinds of abuses that have splinter groups coming in right before the reorg meetings and voting for their own slates of officers with the idea of taking over the party. To this concern, I would offer the reassurance of the safeguard contained within the bill: you must have been appointed at least 60 days before the date of the reorg meeting. This time period, in my opinion, offers a degree of safety that is sufficient. As a former county chair, I can tell you that it becomes very obvious when these kinds of movements are afoot. A 60 day cushion should be plenty of time to mount a defense to these kinds of actions if needed and indeed is sufficient to discourage such action in the first place. The tradeoff of encouraging precinct rep inclusion in voting for officers is more than worth the risk of these kinds of activities which should be able to be handled on their own merit.
3. I would like to close with the reminder that today's society is a mobile one. People because of desire or necessity often need to move their residence much more frequently than in the past. When they do so in the year of a county reorg meeting after the May election, they lose their right to vote for officers in the reorg meetings. This has happened frequently in my experience. The best example I can give is that of one of Oregon's DNC members in my county needed to move. In so doing, she lost her right to vote for officers in the reorg meeting. I hope you will agree with me that this is an unwarranted situation that can be remedied easily with the language provided in the bill. We want the county parties to be inclusionary rather than exclusionary and the provisions included help us achieve this in a common sense and appropriate manner.

Thank you.

Karen Packer

21355 SW Hillsboro Highway, Newberg, OR

503-628-3820 (H), 503-706-2675 (M)