

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2738

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I am concerned about the County Clerks wish to eliminate PCP elections to improve efficiency and save money in their elections divisions. This time, the bill they are sponsoring only proposes changes to the way Precinct Committee Persons are elected, but it is still a bad bill. The election process is the foundation of our representative form of government and should therefore be given the highest priority in budget allocation.

Their wish to not include uncontested races on the ballot would take away the right of voters to see names of candidates running to represent them in their local precinct. Citizens have a right to run themselves or write-in other candidates if they feel they would better represent their precinct. No candidate should be elected by default.

Removing PCPs from the election process provides the potential for the party central committees to take over their local party. PCPs are elected to represent the people in their neighborhood. Allowing appointed PCPs to vote dilutes that important representation.

This bill is an attack on the grassroots.

The county clerks complain that few people file to be a PCP. I believe I know why. I was the PCP Co-chair for Linn County in 2012 and spent a lot of time recruiting PCPs for May 2012 election. In that process, I found many obstacles to PCP involvement that I list below. These obstacles created confusion and discouragement for potential PCPs and PCP recruiters. Our elected officials could address these problems and encourage more grassroots involvement, rather than focusing their efforts on the opposite goal.

PCP Filing Obstacles

1. In January 2012, it was nearly impossible to find information on how to be a PCP on the Secretary of State website--the first place most people would look. There was nothing on the Linn County website.
2. I eventually found two PCP filing forms (SEL105) with a Google search. They were the same forms, but with different filing periods. Both were incorrect forms.
3. A new form finally appeared, but it had one of the ovals already marked for Democrat. That was finally corrected, but it still had the wrong filing period.
4. I checked with our county elections office about getting access to the correct form. They suggested that I call the SOS office. When I called, they did not have the correct form ready. It finally was available several days **after** the filing period began.
5. The filing period is very short for a PCP candidates. Feb 1st to Mar. 6th.
6. The form has two places for precinct number. This was frequently overlooked by filers.
7. The penalty for a mistake is \$125,000?
8. The form asks for the filer's presidential support.
9. The form makes a statement regarding being a party member for 180 days that does not match the state statutes. This created a great deal of confusion. This needs to be corrected. A detailed analysis was done, that I also submit as public testimony.
<http://projectcityhall.blogspot.com/2012/02/oregon-180-day-rule-and-precinct.html>
10. The ballot does not clearly state what precinct you are in.
11. The ballot does not specify that a write-in candidate needs three votes to be elected.

12. The ballot in some counties includes numerous precincts. This is confusing for a potential PCPs and the voters. When voters are not clear, they will typically not vote.
13. The PCP ballot is a separate sheet of paper that most voters do not understand, and therefore ignore.
14. Getting voting lists is expensive. Why? It is public information. We pay our taxes to pay for election staff to do their job. A small fee is fine to cover costs, but this expense hampers grassroots efforts.
15. Some county clerks are no longer entering phone numbers from the voter registration in the database of voters. This makes it very difficult to call voters. What authority do they have to exclude certain information for the database?

These are all obstacles to the grassroots efforts. We need to be encouraging citizen involvement, not hampering it.

It is not lawful to eliminate write-ins for one election and not another. All elections are equal under the law. Voting is a privilege that is granted by the Constitution.

I find it confusing that county clerks, elected to protect a citizen's right to vote and ensure that representatives are elected through a fair and transparent process, would sponsor a bill such as HB 2738. This bill would do the exact opposite.

In addition to addressing the obstacles listed above, I would suggest running an audit on elections to find out exactly where resources are being allocated. Running PCP elections may not be as expensive as they claim it is. It would also have the side benefit of revealing the costs of other areas of elections, such as Vote-By-Mail.