



**Testimony HB 2738**

**Changes in the Methods of Electing Precinct Committeemen and Committeewomen**

**House Rules Committee**

**March 18, 2013**

Chairman Garrett and Members of the House Rules Committee:

For the record, my name is Suzanne Gallagher, I serve as Chair of the Oregon Republican Party.

Today I am here to state my Party's opposition to HB 2738 as written and offer Amendments which I think will improve the process of electing Oregon Precinct Committeemen and Committeewomen, the entry point for many Oregonians into elected public service.

As written, HB 2738 narrows opportunities for participation in this process by eliminating the election of non-contested PCP's from the ballot, allowing non-elected PCP's to play a greater role in electing County Central Committee officers, and changing the equal access of men and women to these positions.

These changes have the effect of reducing the visibility of Precinct Committee people and thereby narrowing access and participation in these posts. My Party believes that this is the wrong direction. We believe that the election laws under review today should broaden, not narrow visibility and opportunity for access.

Specifically, in Section 2 of the bill, we believe that all candidates, even those who are uncontested should be listed on the Primary Ballot so that their neighbors and constituents will know who they are, and that they are accessible to them for advice about public service and political affairs.

We especially think that continuing write-in votes for Precinct where no candidate, or only one candidate, has filed are especially important for reasons of access to the process. Not to have write-in votes available would further lower visibility to the process.

Our Party supports the current system of gender equality which requires half of the positions to be Committeeman and half to be Committeewomen so that ALL Oregonians have access to these positions, regardless of gender.

Section 6 requires the County Clerks to publish the list of nominated PCP's no later than the 31<sup>st</sup> Day after the Primary. We believe that PCP's should be visible on Elections websites when they file, so that filings and vacancies are known in real time, to encourage filing to fill these vacancies.

Section 9, the Oregon Republican Party would continue to opt out of ORS 248.029 and deal with Recall of PCP's as a matter of Party rule, not state law. So this provision would not be useful to us.

Section 10 deals with the issue of 'flooding' where a County Chair could appoint PCP's up to 60 days prior to a County Central Committee election. Because we currently 'opt out' of ORS 248.015, this provision would be in conflict with Article XV of the ORP Bylaws. If we continue to 'opt out' and choose to be governed by our Bylaws, this section would have no effect on us and is therefore an unnecessary change in law.

Electronic filing should cut costs for the County Clerks and makes it easier citizens to participate. Providing additional time to file would encourage participation in the process and increasing information about who has filed during the filing period would help people know which Precinct positions to file for.

We do believe that three changes in the laws governing the elections of PCP's could make a big difference in filling these positions with Oregonians willing to serve:

- 1) Have online filing option for Precinct Committee positions;
- 2) Provide additional time to file for these positions;
- 3) Make the filing of Precinct positions visible to the public when the person files to run as a PCP.

The Oregon Republican Party is pleased to work with the County Clerks, the Secretary of State's Office and House Rules Committee to improve the process of electing Oregon Precinct Committee Persons.

We look forward to a meaningful dialogue to make this important process better.

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