

2013 Oregon Legislative Session
Testimony to Oregon Legislature
Addressing Rules Committee
Hearing Room 50
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HB 2738
after first reading, unamended
OPPOSITION – specific portions

Linn County
Constituent of Phil Barnhart **HD 11**
Elected Precinct Committee Person, 074

Dear Chair and members of the House Rules Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and express my concerns in support and opposition to various portions of HB 2738. My testimony is as an individual PCP and not as a party representative.

Summarized as “Changes name of office of “precinct committeeperson” to “precinct representative.” and “Modifies manner in which precinct representatives may be elected.”

Changing the name of an office from committee person to committee representative

NO OPPOSITION - Certainly the title of an office would have no effect upon the tasks to be performed under ORS statute. It does seem odd that a bill includes any provision that for all practical purposes seems to be gender neutral, from person to representative. Page 2, Section 4 of the bill actually addresses the removal of gender requirements from the statues entirely (ORS 248.015).

As someone who has spent more than half of my working life in traditionally male dominated professions; it is about time. In the absence of a bona fide occupational requirement to specify gender, neutrality is over due by decades.

Requirement for Counties to publish PCP/PCR lists on the Internet

The online or availability of a list of PCP candidates filed would provide potential candidates with additional information prior to filing.

OPPOSITION – While it may be a convenience, to specify the means of publication does not seem to be a good long term strategy. Technologies change. While this may seem a reasonable approach today; a decade from now, another bill may take up valuable legislative time on what is an administrative public record request.

OPPOSITION – I know of no other statutory requirement for a government body to publish on the internet a list that includes my home address. Given the feral nature of some people to harass any elected official, for any perceived slight, I see no need to have that information served up on an electronic platter. Requests for a record can appropriately be handled as any other request for a county record. Does this represent a chilling effect and discouragement to serve in elected office? It may for some people.

Methods of election for PCP/PCR

Filing Period for office The brief filing window is not synchronized with the other primary candidate filing calendars. Opening the filing period to coincide with the filing periods for State legislature and County offices would provide greater visibility to potential candidates.

Electing PCP/PCR as a slate of nominees The names of PCP candidates must be made visible to the voter. A group ballot of all uncontested PCP candidates and their corresponding Precinct numbers, organized and presented by OR House district would simplify the ballot preparation tasks of election clerks and provide information to the voter in the event they wish to write in a candidate.

Write In Candidates Every elected office, without exception should provide for the option to write in a candidate's name. To simplify the process, a ballot portion can be set aside to accommodate the wish of the voter to fill in the precinct number and a space for the candidate's first & last name. The voter's wishes must always be preserved.

First filing after Re-Districting During the filing period immediately following re-districting and associated changes in precinct boundaries, the brevity of the existing filling period collides with the lack of completed maps illustrating new precinct boundaries. In the absence of the information, the adjacencies are not evident and therefore the filing opportunities are not made clear.

RECOMMENDATION, not addressed in HB 2738 Write-In candidates must be specifically provided for on ballots when new precincts are created or perhaps highlighted as new precincts for which no prior PCP's could have filed.

Specific case in 2010 Linn County precinct 074 was non-existent, after redistricting 074 was created from portions of 070 and various bits of unincorporated property around the south side of the town of Lebanon. Based upon my address of nearly 20 years, my home precinct was 070. Precinct 070 ended up being segmented and recombined with other unincorporated portions of Linn County in and around the south City limits of Lebanon. The number of PCP positions available in my old precinct were reduced. I changed my filing to represent the new precinct 074, essentially invisible, having never existed before. Had I not been diligent in going to the elections office and examining draft copies of maps, there would have likely been no PCP for 074.

Electing new County Party Officers at re-organization meetings

Like every elected office serving the public, those being voted into office at re-organization meetings should be accountable to voters rather than being appointees.

County leadership should be, at least every 2 years, accountable by the chain of elected PCP's representing the voters. Appointees must not be injected into re-organization meetings and potentially displacing the will of the voters. Outgoing groups of officers could, potentially, abuse the process of appointees to retain power and control against the will of the voters. Accountability must be maintained.

Overall OPPOSITION to HB 2738, the bill puts greater distance between the voters and their elected representatives. The accountability to the voters must remain at every level of government, especially the role of PCP/PCR.

In conclusion, my concerns about HB 2738 can be summarized by the following:

- NO OPPOSITION to elected office name change and removal of gender requirements.
- OPPOSITION to elected PCP's being singled out to be the only elected office to be mandated as published on County website. A chilling effect may be created unintentionally.
- OPPOSITION to elected PCP lists being mandated to be published on the internet is unnecessary and can be accommodated as any other records request..
- RECOMMENDATION extend the candidate filing period to correspond to that of any other State or County office.
- OPPOSITION to declaring candidates as winning without an opponent.
Recommendation: publish as a slate of unopposed PCPC candidates, organized & presented in HD segments, PLUS maintaining a write in process in simplified form.
- Write in candidacy for PCP/PCR's can and must be preserved for the circumstances that arise after re-districting every 10 years. New precinct boundaries are not always known & understood during the short candidate filing period.
- OPPOSITION to authorization of using appointees to elect leadership in re-organization meetings. Potential abuse of power to maintain control of County political parties through the use of un-elected appointees subverts the will of the voter.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and I strongly urge you to vote no on HB2738. I would be happy to answer any further questions you may have.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Christine L Ruck