

June 25, 2013

From the Desk of
Representative
Jennifer Williamson

Dear Members of the Oregon House of Representatives,

As county elections administrators in both rural and urban Oregon, we are writing to urge you to vote "yes" on House Bill 3521-B in order to modernize the voter registration process and enhance what is already one of the strongest and most secure election systems in the country.

Several counties have expressed concerns about the costs of HB 3521. There will be additional costs for printing and mailing ballots. But there will be considerable savings to county operations as well. In 2012, for example, counties processed more than 125,000 paper registration forms filled out by eligible voters and forwarded by the DMV. Each one of those paper forms was hand-entered, costing staff time and increasing the chance of human error. HB 3521 will replace those 125,000 paper forms with a seamless electronic registration system at a fraction of the cost. HB 3521 will also save counties the cost of hiring additional staff to deal with the surges of registrations that occur as Election Day approaches. HB 3521 will spread the registrations evenly throughout the year, increasing budgetary certainty and saving staff costs. HB 3521 is the most streamlined, cost-effective way to ensure that virtually every eligible Oregon voter—who wishes to do so—is able to cast a ballot on Election Day.

We'd also like to point out that unlike in many other states, in this biennium alone the Oregon Secretary of State has provided counties with \$3 million in federal Help America Vote Act funds to upgrade voting systems and equipment, to make elections offices ADA-compliant, and to cover other mandatory county expenses that otherwise would have been borne by other sources of county funds. The Secretary has pledged to continue to provide \$3 to \$5 million in HAVA funding to counties over the next three years to continue necessary upgrades of local elections equipment.

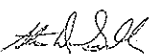
As county elections officials, it is our job is to encourage as many people as possible to participate in the voting process and to make it as convenient as possible. Personally, we would rather have a voter angry because he or she was put on the rolls and received a ballot instead of one who is angry because he or she was not registered and could not vote. In 2012 alone, 16,000 eligible voters registered to vote after the deadline to receive a ballot. If we already have proof that they are eligible to vote, we should shift the default so that Oregon citizens receive a ballot and are given the opportunity to vote if they choose to do so.

It is evident to us, based on decades of experience, that using existing records would further enhance our already secure election process.

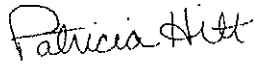
In sum, bureaucratic paperwork—made obsolete in light of today's technology—should not stand in the way of exercising a right, especially the fundamental right to vote. Consider the thousands and thousands of Oregonians whose voices we can securely bring into our system and who will make it as strong as possible, which is what we all want.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of HB 3521.

Sincerely,


Steve Druckenmiller
Linn County Clerk


Tim Scott
Multnomah County Elections Director


Patricia Hitt
Douglas County Clerk