



UPDATING THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVE REVIEW

SB 1544

CHIEF SPONSORS: Senator Roblan, Representative Berger

BACKGROUND:

The Citizens' Initiative Review Commission, passed into law in 2011, oversees fair citizen reviews of ballot measures.

Each Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) brings together 24 randomly-selected Oregonians whose demographics match the state's (geographic location, educational attainment, party registration, voting history, age, gender, and ethnicity). The citizens hear from proponents and opponents of a ballot measure, talk with neutral experts, and deliberate. They publish findings in the Voters' Guide.

The Citizens' Initiative Review Commission is a semi-independent state agency **supported entirely by charitable donations**. It contracts with the nonprofit Healthy Democracy to provide program management for the reviews.

The CIRs are studied by an independent academic research team, which has praised the process for its fairness and utility to Oregon voters. The project recently won the International Association for Public Participation's Project of the Year award.

UPDATES NEEDED:

The following updates are up for consideration with SB 1544.

- **Allow for Increased Efficiency.** Each CIR is required by statute to convene on five consecutive days. The commission would like to test a shorter (3-4 day) version to increase efficiency and reduce costs so that eventually more measures can be considered. The bill states that the panel will meet for not fewer than three or more than five days, and allows the Commission to set the compensation for panelists (currently set at Oregon's average daily wage).
- **Increase Panelist Representation on CIR Commission.** Increase the number of former citizen panelists on the CIR Commission to six (from four), and decrease the number of former moderators to two (from four). This gives the citizen panelists more control over the process.
- **Remove Sunset.** The Commission was given a 2015 sunset date so the legislature could ensure that it achieved fully functional status as a semi-independent agency. Semi-independent agencies do not typically operate under a sunset clause, and its removal will give more confidence to donors about the Commission's status.

HOW IS THE CITIZENS' INITIATIVE REVIEW SUPPORTED?

The Citizens' Initiative Review Commission and the initiative reviews it oversees are currently supported entirely by charitable donations. These donations are solicited by the nonprofit Healthy Democracy, which helped start the review process.

The Meyer Memorial Trust has just funded a \$50,000 grant to help develop the next generation of the CIR in Oregon – a less expensive review that will integrate technology and increase its reach so more Oregonians can gain the information the reviews provide. The 2014 Special Session bill will allow the CIRC to make these changes to improve the process.

SUPPORTERS INCLUDE:

- National Foundations like the Omidyar Network (started by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar).
- Oregon Foundations like Meyer Memorial Trust, the Ford Family Foundation, and the Velma and Carol Saling Foundation.
- Over 200 individuals.

ABOUT HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

Healthy Democracy is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to elevating the public's voice in our democracy. We work to advance innovative and powerful ways for the public to engage in the democratic process and improve our political discourse.

We don't work for one side or another on the 'issues of the day'. We do work on in-depth and fair deliberations, both in-person and online, in order to build meaningful new ways for the public to weigh in on the important issues facing us all. To learn more please visit www.healthydemocracy.org.