

From the
desk of
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Proposed driver-card ballot title buries the truth: Editorial

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With hundreds of cheering onlookers on the steps of the Oregon Capitol, Gov. John Kitzhaber signed a bill into law on May 1, 2013, that would make driver cards available to people who are in the country illegally. *(Benjamin Brink/The Oregonian)*

The Oregonian Editorial Board By **The Oregonian Editorial Board**

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Six of the **House Rules Committee's nine members** voted Tuesday to hijack the normal process for writing ballot titles. The move is a barely disguised marketing effort for a law that would grant driving privileges to people in this country illegally. It won't work, and driver-card supporters who value the Legislature's credibility should oppose the change during an expected House vote Wednesday.

Senate Bill 833, approved during the 2013 session, would make short-term driver cards available to people who can't prove their legal presence. The change is controversial because it would apply to illegal immigrants. But it's a good idea, as we've argued on a number of occasions, because it would boost the use of insurance in a population that drives anyway.

Opponents quickly **gathered enough signatures** to place the law on the November ballot, triggering the contentious process, conducted by the Department of Justice, of producing a ballot title. A number of lawmakers don't like the title the DOJ produced, however, so the House Rules Committee gutted an unrelated elections bill Tuesday and stuffed it with **language that would replace the DOJ's ballot title** and related language with the Legislature's own.

The vehicle for this end-run, **House Bill 4054** would have made a number of changes to election law. One of them would bar people from taking money to gather signatures if they'd been fined for making "any false statement regarding the contents, meaning or effect of the petition." Shading the truth about SB833, however, is exactly what the end-run ballot title does, though we doubt the six legislators who approved it appreciate the irony.

The certified ballot title, which has been appealed to the Supreme Court, is as follows: "Provides Oregon resident 'driver card' without requiring proof of legal presence in the United States."

The end-run ballot title upon which the House may vote Wednesday is as follows: "Establishes limited purpose, duration driver card for individuals who prove Oregon residency, meet driving requirements."

Some lawmakers have complained that the certified title is inaccurate, as it doesn't reflect the safety-related rationale for approving SB833. But the most notable difference between the original title and the proposed