



**Testimony of Frank Dixon
Chairman of the Democratic Party of Oregon
To the Oregon House Rules Committee
June 24, 2015**

Madam Chair, Rep. Val Hoyle, and honorable members of the House Rules Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to discuss how the Democratic Party meets the goal of having wide and fair engagement policies for our members. We take pride in our track record of civic engagement and volunteerism and it has been a priority of the party for many years to improve the participation of our members.

In 2015, the Democratic Party has one of the largest volunteer networks in the state – and through those volunteers we aim to be the model of transparency, participation and democracy.

The foundation of our volunteer networks is the Precinct Committee Person, or PCP. As of June 1, 2015, the DPO has 1,524 PCPs active in 27 counties. Those PCPs organize meetings, recruit candidates, and set policy and platforms. Through their county parties, PCPs elect leadership to sit on our statewide party committee – called the state central committee. This statewide committee adopts rules, sets policies and elects leadership to give direction to the party staff and support our candidates. As chair, I am elected by our State Central Committee every other year.

If someone decides to become a member of the Democratic Party, they are eligible to attend all meetings, participate in all events, run for office and win our nomination. During regular General Election cycles, interested party members that want to win our party nomination can run in our party primary for most offices. Voters in our party select the candidate they support – and whoever wins the primary becomes our party's nominee for the General Election. Even if the candidate doesn't support our entire platform or all of our ideas, they are our nominee if they win approval from voters. This system was created to make sure that the largest number of voices were always heard in our party's elections and to make sure a small number of party elites were not allowed to pick the nominee for our entire party. As

many will recall, the creation of the voter-driven primary was seen and remains to this day a significant democratic reform.

The Democratic Party of Oregon currently follows state law for the administration of political parties under ORS 248.007. We believe these policies serve us well and we believe they hold us accountable to meet our standard for transparency and participation. Our counterpart in major parties, the Oregon Republican Party, use a similar system to our own, and we believe they also meet the standard of transparency and participation that voters deserve.

New perspectives on how Oregon's parties should engage voters and new laws that encourage new voter participation and registration will change the way Oregon's political parties operate, and we hope to be a part of the conversation that creates new systems for a better Oregon democracy. If this committee sees fit to initiate a working group to discuss party laws, party primaries and voter participation through political parties, we hope to be a part of that conversation.

As that conversation begins, let me introduce a few principles that we believe are essential to our long-term success:

1. Parties driven by members, not just by leaders – parties that hold primaries should not be able to pick and choose who is “in” their party and who is not; party leaders should not be able to overrule votes by their members; and members should hold the ultimate final say about party nominees and policy.
2. Democratic leadership – all party members should have a say in the elected leadership of major parties in Oregon.
3. Transparency – rules for the parties should be easily accessible, platforms should be made public and systems for involvement should be available for all parties in all parts of the state.

Thank you for your time today, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process and I look forward to being a part of this discussion moving forward.