



Oregon's African American Faith, Business & Community Leaders
Support NEW Motor Voter 2015 – HB 2177

TO: The 78th Oregon Legislative Assembly
FR: Albina Ministerial Alliance (AMA), Oregon NAACP, African American Leadership Forum, N/NE Business Association (NEEBA), Urban League of Portland
DA: Regular Session 2015
RE: Together We Can Put a Ballot in the Hand of Every Eligible Voter in Oregon

Leaders of Oregon's African American Community support NEW Motor Voter. We, and many who have gone before us, have a long history of supporting access to voting and voter registration for all eligible voters without undue burdens.

This is a fitting year for our state to pass this law as 2015 marks the 50th Anniversary of the watershed year 1965 when 250,000 African Americans fought for and were granted the ability to register to vote in this country. Historically, Black Americans have found it more challenging to register to vote or participate in elections than other Americans. Structures, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, were aimed at disenfranchising Black Americans.

The advent of modern technology to facilitate electronic registration of a significant number of the eligible, but yet unregistered, voters is nothing short of amazing in the context of where we were in America just 50 years ago.

HB 2177 provides for needed updates to the State's existing process for integrating the data collected via the DMV with the Secretary of State's system for tracking and processing voter registrations. We strongly support making voter registration a simple and convenient process without barriers so that every eligible citizen can be registered to vote.

The current paper-based system requires voters to essentially re-register with every move and that leads to people being dropped. A 2012 Pew study found that 24 million registrations nationwide are invalid or have serious errors, such as an incorrect address. A system in which 1 in 8 records is flawed threatens both election integrity and the right to vote. We can do better.

In 2014, the State of Louisiana passed a similar bill to HB 2177, which allows for pre-registration of older teen voters when they obtain their driver's license. Oregon should follow Louisiana's lead in establishing a comparable system in our state.

HB 2177 will make voter registration even easier and more secure by using the data DMV collects for driver licenses to offer a simple and convenient voter registration process for eligible voters.

