



DATE: March 3, 2015
TO: Oregon Senators
FROM: Lane and Douglas County Board of Commissioners
RE: HB 2177

Oregon law provides that Oregon's counties carry out elections in this state and Oregon's counties carry out this duty with a great deal of commitment. Voting is the absolute underpinning of our democracy.

Until the presence of HB 2177 the ability to vote has been predicated upon individual Oregonian's taking a pro-active step to register themselves. The change to an individual having to opt-out rather than opting in has been memorialized in HB 2177. It has been heard and debated in the Rules Committee, in the Ways and Means Committee, and on the floor of the House of Representatives.

While Lane and Douglas County are not necessarily in line with the policy objectives within HB 2177, we write today to clearly express our concern over the lack of certainty the Assembly has allowed with respect to the funding of this measure.

HB 2177 will directly impact our counties' general funds and we remain insecure that the funding required by this bill will present itself. Thankfully, the Fiscal Impact Statement does suggest that the funding for this measure will be contained in a subsequent budget bill, but those words carry none of the same commitment as a piece of actual legislation. There remains no language in HB 2177 that provides for the nullification of the measure IF those budget bills fail to materialize. The Secretary of State's budget bill was heard last week and does not currently include funding for HB 2177.

Douglas County and Lane County share the distinction of being the top two timber counties in Oregon, and indeed the nation. With the elimination of federal Secure Rural Schools Act funding and the significant decline in actual timber harvest from federal lands within our counties, we both are dealing with huge uncertainties with respect to funding key services.

We write today to remind Senators that any dollars required to be spent from our General Funds are dollars not available for public safety, which remains amongst the highest priority of our shared constituency. The difference is that voter registration services will be a mandated spend.

HB 2177 appears to be the cart slightly ahead of the horse and we ask that you recognize the absolute need for the funding which currently, from our down-state perspective, remains an abstract conversation in Salem relegated for an end of session discussion.