

February 4, 2016



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Oregon Progressive Party Position on Bill at 2016 Session of Oregon Legislature:

SB 1501: Oppose

Dear Committee:

The Oregon Progressive Party opposes SB 1501, because it fails to fully correct a drafting error in the 2015 Motor Voter Law (HB 2177) and thereby removes from Oregon's 3 smaller minor parties the protection attempted for them against losing their status as minor parties as a result of the increased voter registration numbers that will result from that law.

Some minor parties (Oregon Progressive Party, Constitution Party, and Pacific Green Party) maintain their status under ORS 248.008(4)(b), which requires a minor party to maintain membership of "at least one-tenth of one percent of the total votes cast in the state or electoral district for all candidates for Governor at the most recent election at which a candidate for Governor was elected to a full term" plus win 1% in a statewide race at least once every 4 years. The current Motor Voter law, enacted in 2015, sought to protect minor parties that use ORS 248.008(4)(b) for their continued existence by freezing the "the total number of registered electors in this state" to the number as of July 1, 2015. But that language was in error, because these minor parties do not base their status on any measurement of "the total number of registered electors in the state." Instead of correcting this drafting error, SB 1501 deletes that protection for these 3 minor parties, placing in jeopardy the continued viability of the Oregon Progressive Party in particular.

There were 1,469,717 votes cast in the 2014 election for Governor. Thus, the current ORS 248.008(4)(b) requirement, applicable in August 2016, is that these minor parties have membership of at least 1470 members. The Oregon Progressive Party currently has 1906 members (Constitution Party = 3550; Pacific Green Party = 9270). The added registrants resulting from HB 2177

will increase this 1470 threshold, based upon turnout in the 2018 election for Governor. If Motor Voter adds 300,000 new registrants, as has been predicted, and they turn out in that election at the 71% rate achieved in 2014, that will add 214 to that threshold.

SB 1501 merely moves the protection to ORS 248.008(4)(a), which allows a minor party to maintain its status by having membership equal to at least 1/2 of 1% of all registered voters, regardless of running any candidates for office. That subsection currently applies only to the Working Families Party and the Libertarian Party.

So, SB 1501 extends “freezing the denominator” protection to 2 minor parties but not to the other 3 minor parties. We believe it should be extended to all minor parties and to the Independent Party of Oregon as well for maintaining its status as a major party, which also depends on the total number of Oregon registered voters under a different statute.

Note that the Americans Elect Party technically exists as a minor party but will be decertified when it fails to achieve “at least one-tenth of one percent of the total votes cast in the state or electoral district for all candidates for Governor at the most recent election at which a candidate for Governor was elected to a full term” as of August 2016.

Please include this statement in the legislative record for this bill.

Thank you.

Oregon Progressive Party

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