

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: May have revenue impact, statement not yet issued

SUBSEQUENT REFERRAL TO: Ways and Means

Action:

Vote:

Yeas:

Nays:

Exc.:

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Meeting Dates: 2/4, 2/11

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Directs public universities and community colleges to increase voter registration access and information. Directs Secretary of State to ensure that within one mile of public university and community college campus, there is at least one designated as official ballot drop site. Directs public universities and community colleges to: (a) display link to Secretary of State’s online voter registration tool on website; (b) give school’s official student government or its equivalent opportunity to provide nonpartisan voter registration information during: student orientations programs; campus welcome events and resident life activities.; (c) provide official student government list of faculty contact information for purpose of contacting faculty to seek permission to provide nonpartisan voter classroom presentations; (d) provide opportunity for students and student groups to provide nonpartisan registration services in nonreserved public space on school property; (e) if school of higher education owns or operates student housing, it is to work with local county elections office three months prior to primary and general election, to obtain address information of students living in on-campus housing must provide to receive ballots and make information available to school’s official student government. Provisions related to public universities and community colleges become operative for 2017-18 academic school year. Requires state to use business reply envelopes for the postage of ballot return envelopes for each election held in Oregon. Applies to elections held after January 1, 2017. Declares emergency, effective on passage

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Mobility of college students
- Need to increase voter participation
- Voter registration education
- Ability to deliver ballots to campus housing
- Methods to return voted ballots
- Reasons voters’ do not return their ballot
- Costs of voting

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

-1 amendment: Directs Secretary of State (SOS) to ensure that within four miles of public university and community college main campus, there is at least one designated as official ballot drop site. Clarifies where school is required to display direct link to SOSs online voter registration tool, on Internet website or on any appropriate student-focused digital communication network managed by school. Give school’s official student government or its equivalent opportunity to provide nonpartisan voter registration services “as part of” student orientation programs held by school’s administration; campus welcome events that occur before classes begin each academic term; and residence life program activities. Clarifies that professional contact information for school faculty will be provided upon request of school’s official student government or its equivalent. Requires students and student groups providing nonpartisan registration services in nonreserved public space on school property, conform to rules of conduct and rules for reserving space at school.

-2 amendment: Removes direction to public universities and community colleges to increase voter registration access and information. Requires voter to return their own ballot by mail or depositing it in designated drop box location. Prohibits person from collecting or returning ballot for voter except if voter is immediate family member or ongoing caregiver for voter.

BACKGROUND: College students may have difficulty finding information regarding voting as they move to a new community for school. These challenges include: not knowing voter registration rules and deadlines, not having acceptable identification for voter registration or voting purposes, and confusion about where to vote.

In 2007, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 951, directing community colleges and state institutions of higher education to adopt plans to encourage students to register to vote and to vote in elections. Senate Bill 1586 requires public universities and community colleges display link to Secretary of State's online voter registration tool on school's website. In addition, the measure would give a school's official student government or recognized school group, opportunity to provide nonpartisan voter registration services during administration-sponsored orientation programs, campus welcome events and during resident life activities.

In Oregon's vote-by-system, registered voters receive their ballot, including a secrecy and return envelope, up to three weeks before an election. Upon completing their ballot, the voter must then sign the envelope and return it to the county clerk by 8:00PM on election night. A voter can either put a stamp on the envelope and mail it back to the office of the county clerk or deposit it to a designated drop site within the county (ORS 254.470 (4)(b) & (c)). Senate Bill 1586 requires the state to use business reply envelopes for the postage of ballot return envelopes for each election held in Oregon.