

Elections Division • Tim Scott, Director

February 28, 2017

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 802

Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Ferrioli, and Senators Beyer, Boquist, and Roblan

Multnomah County supports SB 802 as a low cost way to encourage engagement with young voters by allowing them to register to vote at 16.

Currently in Oregon you must be at least 17 years old to register to vote but can get a drivers' license or learning permit at 16 years old. The Oregon Motor Voter (OMV) Automatic Registration Act now allows any eligible citizen to be automatically registered to vote after getting a new or replacement Oregon drivers' license. In the current system 17 year olds are included in the OMV process but 16 year old Oregonians are not. Potentially these younger drivers may not go through the OMV process until their licenses need to be renewed eight years later and will not be exposed to the automatic registration process until as old as 24 years old. If 16 year olds are allowed to register to vote in the same manner as 17 year olds then they would not miss out on the opportunity to be engaged early on in the vote by mail process.

It is important to provide opportunities for young adults to vote and start them on the habit of voting and participating in democracy as early as possible. Closing this small hole in the OMV act would allow 16 and 17 year olds to be preregistered to vote and to receive their first ballot in the mail on or after their 18th birthday. This could get as many as 10,000 16 year olds registered statewide based on the number of 17 year olds registered today.

The financial impact of this bill will be negligible but increased voter participation among 18 - 24 year olds would be expected to increase and this opportunity and habit of voting early on would be carried on throughout their adult life.

Multnomah County urges you to support SB 802 to get more young people involved in voting.

