



**OREGON STATE SENATE**  
**900 COURT ST NE**  
**SALEM, OR 97301**

**Testimony on SJR 2**

March 1, 2017

I am Senator Rod Monroe representing District 24 which includes East Portland and North Clackamas County.

Senate Joint Resolution 2 proposes an amendment to the Oregon Constitution that would allow citizens to register to vote up to the day before an election. Currently, Oregon citizens are required to register to vote at least twenty days before an election. Before 1986, Oregon allowed citizens to register up to the day of an election.

As an educator for over fifty years, I have always encouraged the younger generation to vote. Senate Joint Resolution 2 would encourage more young people to vote and would take away one of the main obstacles that the more mobile younger generation faces-When young people change addresses to go to college, they lose their registration.

In the 2016 election, 58% of all eligible voters voted, but only 50% of young voters ages 18-29 voted.

The current twenty-day law came about because of the Rajneesh cult in the mid to late 1980s. Acharya Rajneesh came from India and set up roots in Wasco County, Oregon in 1981. Once in Oregon, Rajneesh created a cult of over two thousand people who made up his spiritual following.

Rajneesh wanted to take over the government in Wasco County, so he set up a plan to enlist some of his followers to hold positions in the county government. Under this plan, Rajneesh could grow his following and have a direct connection to the government he wanted to control.

Rajneesh also wanted to sabotage the Wasco County voters so that he could gain control in the November election. His biggest plan involved poisoning Oregon voters with salmonella in local restaurants. He and his followers poisoned over seven hundred people and the incident became the largest bioterrorism event on US soil.

Ultimately, Rajneesh was arrested and deported back to India. However, Rajneesh had managed to create fear in the eyes of the Wasco voters. Following the salmonella outbreak, voter registration was halted. In 1986 the Oregon voters approved a Constitutional amendment that said that voter registration must end twenty calendar days before an election. Since 1986 this amendment has stood in place in the Oregon Constitution.

