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To: Senate Rules Committee
From: Daniel Lewkow, Common Cause Oregon
Date: March 6, 2017
Re: Support for Senate Bill 683

Chair Burdick, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Common Cause, I urge the Senate Committee on Rules to pass Senate Bill 683. This is an important step forward for making our democracy accessible to every Oregonian.

Oregon has a proud track record of encouraging people from all backgrounds to participate in our elections. We led the country with vote-by-mail and our innovative New Motor Voter program. With each of these reforms, we recognized that people's life circumstances differ, and that different voters face different barriers to casting a ballot. Those barriers are real for the people impacted, and it is our job to knock them down. This is how we engage more people in the crucial conversations about our state's future.

Senate Bill 683 continues this value by knocking down further barriers. One barrier exists for our active duty soldiers currently serving overseas, who must take the additional step of getting and paying for international postage to vote. If we pass SB 683 and cover the costs of reply postage, we can better allow our servicewomen and servicemen to participate in the very activity that they work to protect.

Another barrier exists for people with certain disabilities. Oregonians who face visual and/or mobile impairment must take additional steps to cast a ballot, and sometimes must purchase more stamps to return a larger ballot. If they face mobile impairment, they may not be able to leave their homes to secure stamps at all. SB 683 ensures that those who live with disabilities have as much access to their elections as anyone else.

Democracy, like any other issue, is a constantly evolving and changing practice. And we need to continue to refine and adjust it, so that it keeps working for all people. These are just two examples of communities that face barriers to democracy. And the barriers that they face are real and impactful. Please take the next step in our storied history by knocking down these barriers to voting, and pass SB 683.