



**TO: Senate Rules Committee**  
**FR: Nikki Fisher, Executive Director Oregon Bus Project**  
**DA: March 6, 2017**  
**Re: Support for Senate Bill 683**

Chair Burdick, Vice Chair Ferrioli, and members of the committee,

My name is Nikki Fisher and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Bus Project. The Oregon Bus Project is Oregon's leading youth lead organization. Our mission is making politics accessible and fun for young people, through mobilization, empowerment and building progressive communities while making Oregon a better place for everyone. We are an organization focused on engaging young people in the democratic process by making it fun and accessible. The Bus drives votes, it drives leaders, and it drives change.

I am here today in support of Senate Bill 683. Since last session when we last brought this bill forward, we've spent time talking with Oregonians who are personally affected by this issue.

We spoke with Charles, who was a disabled veteran and first-time voter who didn't have a stamp at home, or the ability to drop off his ballot at a drop box.

We spoke with Bobby and Jenna, whose story will be submitted into the record. They were first-time parents who mistakenly mailed their ballots with no stamp a few weeks after Jenna gave birth to their first child. They live in Linn County, where ballots are returned for insufficient postage. At the time they sent their ballots in, remembering a stamp was lost in the chaos of diapers and nap time and all of the other things new parents worry about.

We met with disability rights advocates who told us that voters with visual disabilities who have to request special ballots often have to provide additional postage because their ballots weigh more than a single stamp allows.

We polled new registrants who registered to vote under Motor Voter and found that 42 percent of them didn't have a postage stamp at home. While they understood it was their civic duty to vote, many first-time voters didn't understand the process.

What's more, we know that this is an issue that particularly affects Oregonians serving in the military serving in non-combat zones overseas. Approximately 1,000 Oregonians who are active members of the military receive their ballot at an



overseas address. That's 1 out of every 6 identified Oregon voters who serve in the military. A recent study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, which is available on OLIS, ranked Oregon fifth worst in the nation for military voting because 74 percent of our ballots went unreturned in 2014.

You'll also find a report on OLIS from a recent postage pilot project conducted in King County, Washington. In two different special elections where postage was paid for all mail in ballots, voter turnout outperformed expectations by more than seven to ten percent.

We understand the budgetary our state faces this session, and we understand that there will be a cost associated with paying for postage on Oregon ballots. However, we believe that every Oregon voter, regardless of where they live, how old they are or, or whether they require a special ballot, should have an opportunity to weigh in on issues of critical importance to them and to their community, free of barriers. And that means passing paid postage for all ballots.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nikki Fisher  
Executive Director  
The Oregon Bus Project