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ATTN: Senate Committee on Rules

Chair Rosenbaum and members of the committee,

The Independent Party of Oregon supports this legislation based on the premise that there should be no cost to voting; that the postage requirement amounts to a poll tax in communities where access to ballot drop locations is limited; and the belief that the legislation would increase public participation in elections.

We note that the fiscal impact of this bill, based on the fiscal assigned to a similar version in 2016, is likely to be significant. In 2016, the fiscal was approximately \$2 million. ¹

If the current legislation does not move forward because of the fiscal impact, as an incremental step, we recommend that ORS 254.470(c) instead be revised to allow for the counties or the SOS to pay for all ballots that would otherwise be returned due to non-sufficient postage. Currently, the OACC and several county elections offices interpret ORS 254.470(c) to mean that they are explicitly prevented from paying for return postage. ²

I was forwarded an email this week from Tim Scott, the director of Multnomah County elections, in which he said that the current incidence of people failing to provide postage on ballots is very small. He estimated that cost at only a few hundred dollars, since most Oregonians who mail their ballots use the correct postage. ³

The proposed amendment would ensure that ballots received by the post office are delivered in the event that USPS refuses to deliver ballots lacking sufficient postage, thereby ensuring that the chain of custody for all Oregon ballots is respected.

Sincerely,

Sal Peralta
Secretary, Independent Party of Oregon

¹ <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2016R1/Downloads/MeasureAnalysisDocument/33167>

² Email from Tim Scott dated 3/3/2017

³ Same email above