

March 8, 2017

The Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Chair
The Honorable Mike McClane, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Dan Rayfield, Vice-Chair
House Rules Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Room H-295
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2945 - filing deadlines for candidates for state office

Dear Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs McClane and Rayfield, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Al Switzer, among other things, I am a former four term, Republican Klamath County Commissioner, and former President of the Association of Oregon Counties. I was also the candidate recruited by the citizens of Oregon House District 56 to run in response to the Whitsett Maneuver that removed them, the voters, from the election process.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony in support of HB 2945 for your consideration as you deliberate this important piece of legislation.

Because of what has become known as “Whitsett maneuver” ie. incumbents withdrawing from an election the day after the deadline to file had passed and after their friends filed candidacy documents minutes before the deadline, thereby ensuring their friends names were the only names printed on the ballot, our Republican primary became a closed primary where the voters ability to choose from a field of candidates in these open seats were manipulated away from them. With no candidates filing from any of the two other major parties, the primary election essentially became a closed primary where four individuals supplanted themselves above and ahead of every voter in Oregon's Senate District 28, and House District 56.

HB2945 seeks to rectify this maneuver. While I agree that it needs to be corrected, I am concerned that a three day window of extension for filing may not be adequate enough in providing citizens enough time to gather and recruit other candidates to file. I realize the narrow timeframe between the current filing deadlines and the lead-time required to design, print, and mail the overseas and military ballots, but I would recommend amending HB 2945 to extend the filing window by 7 days, unless it would result in preventing the state from meeting its other obligations to ensure the ballots are received by the voters and the elections are held in compliance with current ORS's.

Regardless of party affiliation, I am confident all of you would agree that, in our representative form of government, we must work together to preserve free, fair, honest, and open elections.

Thank you to the committee for allowing me to submit this testimony

Sincerely,

Former Klamath County Commissioner, Al Switzer