

Brian Wanty

March 22, 2017

House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB2571 Removes option for major political parties to elect precinct
committeepersons at primary election

Chair Williamson and committee members,

I support HB2571 with an amendment that requires counties to insert a flyer produced by each major county political party in the corresponding partisan primary ballots. It's in the the public interest to encourage broadly-based participation in party organizations. Without any outreach to voters registered with a party, the party organizations could become controlled by insiders again as they were before the reforms of the early 20th Century.

The flyer could be used by parties as a call to convention or a call for PCPs. The current precinct committeeperson (PCP) elections provide outreach to some degree. Inserting a flyer could be a more effective way to encourage involvement in parties than PCP elections by reducing the current barrier to entry that filing for PCP positions in February creates. Parties would be free to innovate as to the best way to use the flyer and would be in competition with each to attract PCPs to help their respective parties.

Removing the option for major political parties to elect PCPs would be cost saving measure for counties. With more positions than candidates in most cases, PCP elections are much like a Cub Scouts pinewood derby where every kid gets a trophy. The cost to taxpayers of compiling the ballots and counting the results isn't justified because the elections don't provide a meaningful choice and aren't competitive. In most cases, voting has not effect on the outcome.

In addition, the current apportionment of PCP positions based on electors along with at-large elections dilutes and debases the value of party member votes. Disproportionate influence is given to areas where a party membership is lowest. This may be contributing to the decline in major party membership seen in recent decades as fewer voters see their values and interests represented.

Please support HB2571 with the amendment proposed above.

Regards,


Brian Wanty