



Date: March 23, 2017
To: House Rules Committee, Chair Williamson and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations
RE: *HB 2873 [Centralized information on bonds and local options]*

It is my honor to testify in support of HB 2873 on behalf of OEA's 44,000 members. Because we often act as supportive partners to school districts when they propose local option and bond levies to voters, we have much experience with the current system and its pitfalls.

We have observed that, in the interest of good government, it makes sense for individuals and organizations to know in a timely fashion what measures may be brought to the ballot in any given election. At the state level, this is done by timely posting of initiatives from the point of circulation on, through the Secretary of State-managed ORESTAR system. In Oregon's 36 counties, however, this is not the case. Though each has filing deadlines for municipal corporations and also requirements of public noticing via news media, there is no centralized source to learn of all the measures that may come forward. Sometimes local news sources elect not to publish notices, and frequently local entities make the final decision to go to the ballot after the Voters' Pamphlet deadline has passed, making even this information channel an unreliable source of complete information for local ballot proposals.

The consequences of this unreliable patchwork system are several.

- Parties interested in the outcome of a levy do not always know that a school district, community college, or other entity has put a question to the ballot in time to engage;
- Campaigns for worthy causes may not have independent means to get the word out in an effective and timely way;
- Voters may be asked to vote on proposals that have not had enough public scrutiny because of insufficient information sharing;
- No filing timeline congruity exists across all counties that would help unearth the total picture of any given ballot.

Transparency and meaningful voter participation will be aided by asking that ORESTAR track all local election proposals, just as it does all state initiatives. We hope to do that in as effective and least-burdensome way possible, both for local taxing authorities and for county clerks. HB 2873 contemplates a streamlined process – either in the bill as drafted or with amendments that further enable all parties to provide this information easily.

We thank you for considering this idea to help further public dialogue about issues important to our schools, to voters, and to Oregon communities.