



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 5, 2017

To: [House Committee on Rules](#)
[Representative Jennifer Williamson](#), Chair

Re: [HB 3422](#) – Petition signature verification observation – **Support with comments**

The League of Women Voters supports transparency in government and public access. We value the opportunity to support increasing citizen participation in government. We particularly want to improve awareness and understanding in our voting processes at a time when trust in elections is questioned.

We understand it is already possible to observe the process of initiative petition signature verification and that the purpose of this bill is to codify the process. We understand cameras have been ordered and remote live-streaming and recorded observation will be possible. This may make observer access limitations moot. Please consider:

In order to allow for inquiry processing time, the elections calendar would be narrowed, from 30 days to 20 days. Additional staff will likely be needed, depending on our unpredictable number of initiatives and related signature volume generated. This could be costly, given the narrow time frame. Consistently this session, the League is concerned with the budget shortfall, especially with unpredictable cost factors.

We are concerned that unduly large signature verification requests could hobble petition processing, resembling recent concerns described in public records access discussions. Relating to this bill, requests could be reviewed to verify relevance of the scope of information requested. For example, an observer might request review of all signatures. Since dispute referral to the Attorney General has been added from Legislative Counsel, we recommend consulting the Attorney General's Public Records Task Force.

We think it is important to clarify reasonable goals for observation. Observers could verify that signature comparisons are being made in compliance with a well-defined and explained process, describing what to watch out for. Observers may expect that they, too, could personally, closely compare petition sheets and DMV records. If there were an expectation that actual signatures could be seen and compared, from petition and DMV sources, for example, there could be privacy concerns.

We think the description for authorized observers should be broadened to include citizens at large or others who are not affiliated with political parties and may not be aware of how to contact petition sponsors. We look forward to seeing progress in addressing these questions.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Rebecca L. Gladstone in black ink.

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR Governance Coordinator