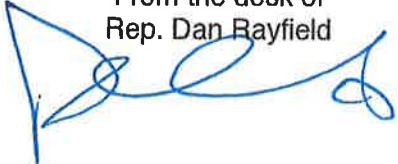




From the desk of 6/8/17
Rep. Dan Rayfield



American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon Urges a Yes Vote on SB 802

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ urges your support of SB 802, which lowers Oregon's voter pre-registration age from 17 to 16 years old. The ACLU of Oregon supports this bill as an important effort to promote access to the ballot and protect the fundamental right to vote.

Voter registration is the most significant barrier to voting. Recognizing this, Oregon has been a leader in honoring the right to vote by streamlining and improving our voter registration system. Since 2007, Oregon has allowed 17 year-olds to preregister to vote. In 2016, Oregon Motor Voter took effect. This bill will take the next step of allowing the approximately 20,000 16 year-olds who visit the DMV every year to apply for their driver's licenses to simultaneously pre-register to vote.

Research shows that youth pre-registration increases participation in democracy. When young people engage in the democratic process, they are more likely to remain active, engaged voters into adulthood. According to a 2010 study, states that allow persons who are at least 16 years old to register to vote, pre-registration increases youth turnout rates by about 4.7%.² In addition, pre-registration increases turnout rates by about 5.5% for youth of color. Pre-registration can also be an effective method for registering non-college students to vote, who otherwise have registration rates 18% lower than college students.

Pre-registration is easy to implement and cost-efficient. Currently, ten states and the District of Columbia have demonstrated that pre-registration for 16 year-olds takes little to no cost to implement and in many cases saves money, while reducing voter registration errors. This explains why pre-registration policies in several of those states, including Louisiana and Florida, passed with bipartisan support. Oregon can and should follow their lead.

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¹ The ACLU of Oregon is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights. We have more than 43,000 members across the State of Oregon.

² McDonald, M. P. & M. Thornburg (2010), Registering the youth through voter preregistration, NYUJ Legislation & Public Policy 13, 551 (research in Hawaii and Florida).