



## **Oregon Secretary of State's Office Testimony on SB 1510A**

As Oregon's chief elections officer, the Secretary of State is responsible for ensuring a fair election process and encouraging maximum citizen participation in our democracy. The Secretary supports the technical fixes and policy improvements in SB 1510A's Sections 1-16.

Notwithstanding the emergency clause in Section 23, we want to note that Sections 1-3 will require programming changes in ORESTAR that cannot be completed before the May primary election. To limit confusion and unfair application, we will likely need to delay enforcement of those changes until programming is complete, which we expect to occur well before the November general election.

### **Voter Privacy Protections (Sections 20-22)**

Secretary Richardson appreciates the legislature's response to his request for assistance in safeguarding the privacy of Oregon's registered voters and is pleased to work together on this critical goal. Balancing the need for both privacy and transparency is a critical challenge in the internet age. While disclosure of some voter information is necessary to ensure full accountability for the conduct of elections, other information should be protected. Gaps and ambiguities in the current law mean that the Secretary of State and each county elections office can have different policies on what information is disclosed.

Due to the present capacities for digital mining, identity theft, and widespread dissemination of personal information, on July 27, 2017, our office announced a new policy that a voter's phone number and birth month/day are no longer disclosed on voter lists obtained from our office. SB 1510A ensures continued disclosure of all information that we currently disclose to promote election transparency and protects all information we currently protect, except phone numbers. We want to note that, although Section 21 creates a general rule that signatures are not disclosed, Section 22 serves as a specific exception to allow observers to view (but not copy) signatures to ensure transparency during the signature verification process for ballots and petitions.

### **Grassroots Petitioning (Sections 17-18)**

Secretary Richardson appreciates the legislature's response to his request to clarify two areas of Oregon's initiative circulation statutes. However, he is disappointed that the main clarification in SB 1510A restricts initiative voting rights. Secretary Richardson believes that it would be better public policy to codify and expand initiative voting rights.

Secretary Richardson recommends that grassroots petitioners should be allowed to circulate petitions with the Attorney General's certified ballot title during any legal challenge. This would empower average Oregonians by preventing powerful and wealthy special interest groups from using frivolous lawsuits to manipulate the initiative process.

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