



To: Senate Rules Committee

From: Sydney Scout, State Director, Oregon Working Families Party

Re: SB 226

Wednesday, April 3rd, 2019

Dear Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Baertschinger, and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Working Families Party is a political party founded in Oregon in 2006. We helped bring fusion voting back to the state, and we now use it to cross nominate candidates for partisan office. The Oregon Working Families Party represents 9,899 registered voters, and our affiliates represent tens of thousands more working people across the state.

The Oregon Working Families Party supports the passage of Senate Bill 226. We are especially supportive of two provisions within the bill:

1) Motor Voter Fix: In early February, we went on record to support the Motor Voter fix as it appeared in SB 224. We still believe this minor, technical update should remain in SB 224 and be passed as swiftly as possible. We maintain our support for this fix as it is included in SB 226.

As a reminder, minor parties like us have long maintained our status by having .5% of all registered voters or running a statewide candidate of our own every four years. Oregon's Motor Voter program inadvertently doubled how many voters this requires by adding a large number of voters who are by default unaffiliated.

The Motor Voter Fix corrects this by changing the standard to .5% of all voters who are registered *with a party*. At the Oregon Working Families Party, we want to be able to choose whether and when we run stand-alone statewide candidates based on our core policy mission and strategic considerations (such as avoiding running spoilers), not just as a means to maintaining our status.

2) Minor Party Primary Opt-In: We support state-funded primaries for minor parties that choose to opt-in for specific races. The Oregon Working Families Party sees the value of being able to utilize state-funded primaries for strategically chosen races. We know that this opportunity would make a significant difference for our nearly 10,000 registered voters, all of whom are currently blocked out from participating in any partisan primaries in the state. The current laws about state-funded primary elections benefit long-established major parties at the expense of smaller parties like ours. With only a small cost to the state (~\$140,000), this provision would bring us a step closer to leveling the playing field for all voters in the state.

We are grateful to the late Secretary of State Richardson and his staff for their dedication to leveling the playing field between Oregon political parties in order to promote equity and encourage voter choice, and we look forward to continuing this effort with Secretary Clarno. Thank you to Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Baertschinger, and the Members of the Committee for considering this bill.

Sincerely,

Sydney Scout
State Director
Oregon Working Families Party