



**To:**

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On General Government  
[jwmgg.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:jwmgg.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

**April 24, 2019**

Dear Co-Chair Wagner, Co-Chair Smith, and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government:

I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) to express our **support for House Bill 5034, P.O.P 207, the Secretary of State's budget request which would help fund for pre-paid postage stamps for our ballots**. As a statewide, grassroots organization we work with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the state of Oregon to advance social justice. We envision a just and equitable world where Asians and Pacific Islanders are fully engaged in the social, economic and political issues that affect us. Pre-paid postage stamps is an excellent means of removing institutional and social barriers that prevent our community from participating in our democratic process.

One of the tenets of APANO's election work is to expand access to the ballot and engage communities that are often ignored by the mainstream political process. APANO has worked to expand language access through our voter guides, new voter registration, multilingual outreach, and visibility in ethnic media -- trying our best to make sure that caring members can exercise their vote and their right to shape the society we live in. All of this is guided by and in service towards the fundamental premise that each person's ballot must be turned in, to have their voice counted and affirmed by the government that represents them.

With pre-paid postage stamps, for two weeks leading up to every election, we could turn every mailbox in Oregon into a ballot dropbox, a site for democracy, and an opportunity to bring more Oregonians into our robust civic life.

Collectively, our electoral campaigns and processes already spend tens of millions of dollars each election cycle to help voters reach their own conclusions. But our State and democracy are made less strong if our legislature does not devote commensurate resources to making sure ballots are received and counted, and the process to do so made less cumbersome for the growing number of new Oregon voters.

APANO understands that many of the folks we serve are working-class, immigrant families, and folks who care deeply about their community but are not as familiar with how to exercise their vote in Oregon. The last 6 days before the November General Elections, APANO piloted a non-partisan Ballot Assistance Center. The center ran an unofficial ballot drop box, helped voters with their ballot, provided rides to Multnomah County Election Offices, and helped pick up ballots from community member's homes. In 4 days, and through word of mouth, the center helped over 120 voters. The center grew our language capabilities and commitment to make sure that our communities don't make simple, solvable obstacles (like not having a stamp on hand or mobility hardships) that lead to larger, systemic disenfranchisement. Non-partisan ballot assistance -- helping eligible voters fulfill their enfranchisement -- is an integral part of our democratic process, and paid postage is an incredibly efficient and meaningful reform to aid this.

APANO believes that the pre-paid postage will make the voting process more accessible to communities who continue to face barriers when it comes to voting. People of color and working-class families can worry less about taking time out of their schedules to cast their ballots. Not only will pre-paid postage reinforce the importance of our vote, it also helps remind voters that their vote matters, that they are encouraged to vote by their government.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and urge the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government to vote in support for the Secretary of State's budget request, HB 5034, P.O.P 207.

Sincerely,  
Robin Ye  
Political Director  
APANO