



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-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 23, 2019

To: [Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On General Government](#)
[Senator Rob Wagner](#) and [Representative Greg Smith](#), Co-Chairs

Re: **HB 5034** – Policy Packages 105 and 207, Elections staffing – **Support with Comments**

The League of Women Voters supports fair, transparent, and accessible elections and efficiency in government. For decades we have supported elections improvements in Oregon. We were asked to submit testimony for elections' staffing. We appreciate increasing interest and demands from growing citizen participation in all aspects of elections. Our Elections staff must have adequate funding.

Policy Package 207: The League supports pre-paid ballot return envelopes. This was written in September 2018, in anticipation of proposed 2019 legislation, now proceeding as [SB 861 A](#).

Policy Package 105: With further comments, we support funding these 3 FTEs ([budget page 295](#)).

1. respond to elections misinformation on social media (1 FTE) and
2. increase OCVR and ORESTAR technical support (2 FTEs); 1 each for ORESTAR & OCVR.

We see growing inefficiency, with capacity and possible security concerns with outdated candidate filing software. **We urge a transition to allow *online* acceptance of all Oregon candidate filings.**

See [HB 2234](#), for common online candidate filing, heard in the House Rules Committee, with a work session forecast soon. See [LWVOR testimony](#) in support, also from [our Vote411 administrator](#).

Background: We negotiated in 2017 for updates to allow ORESTAR filing online for all Oregon candidates. We got input from the Secretary of State Legislative Director, the Elections Division, the Oregon Association of County Clerks, the League of Oregon Cities, the Special Districts Association of Oregon, and for good measure, the Oregon School Boards Association. When we negotiated for this 2019 pre-session filing, Elections staff asked that ORESTAR and OCVR not be cited, that candidate filing software references be generic. They foresaw either updating or replacing these programs. Concerns for replacing both programs for filing may have eased since updating ORESTAR may be possible. We understand the Elections Division would prefer writing in-house software updates to purchasing proprietary replacement software and are not able to compare those costs or efficacy.

ORESTAR v. OCVR: Candidate filing and campaign contributions are transparent and publicly accessible through ORESTAR, but only available to state-level candidates. OCVR (Oregon Centralized Voter Registration System) is used for voter registration and local candidate filing. Allowing all candidates to file with a single system can significantly reduce labor for local elections' staff, who must decipher and transcribe the usually hand-written filing forms. If candidates are unable or prefer not to file online, Clerks and Recorders may continue to file electronically on their behalf, much as they do now. Filing fee collection would remain with presiding, certifying officials.

League interest: We appreciate the possible increased efficiency of filing online. To provide voting information, we need candidate emails for our *Voters' Guides*. We now list *all* Oregon candidates and ballot measures online. Since local candidates file via OCVR, which does not accept online filing and is not publicly accessible, we must contact all County Clerks and check with most of the 240-some City Recorders, usually repeatedly. They all process candidate information differently and accessing it is extremely demanding for the League. We are committed to making it easier for voters.

Election concerns: The Elections Division has verbally stated support for this efficiency improvement and would pursue it, if directed by the Legislature and provided with adequate funding. They want to ensure secure communications with all local elections officials. There is agreement for needing expeditious software updating, and we do not advocate for a transition during ongoing election filings.

We refer you to their Challenges list, [budget page 290](#). Note our shared concerns:

- **Maintaining and supporting the major applications in order to keep pace with rapid technological advancements in voting processes and the expectations of voters in a digital world.**
- Special elections being called that have not been planned for or budgeted.
- **Statutory changes affecting the performance and functionality of the ORESTAR application have not been accompanied by additional funding or resources to accommodate the changes.**
- The time, expense and unpredictable number and nature of lawsuits against the Division.
- **Managing the two major applications of the Division (OCVR and ORESTAR) that exist in two distinctly separate architecture environments and are maintained and supported in contrasting ways.**
- **The Oregon Centralized Voter Registration System is currently funded with federal funds. We anticipate that these funds will be depleted during this budget cycle. Providing general fund dollars to continue this system will be critical to the agency**

Please note:

- Our support of [SB 861 A](#), for pre-paid ballot envelopes, assumes that actual cost will probably be far less than that forecast, which covers the cost of returning all ballots via USPS.
- Cost analysis for common online candidate filing may be called for in HB 2234 proceedings.

We urge your support and adequate funding, to expeditiously direct Elections to budget for staffing to implement common online candidate filing.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President



Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR Governance Coordinator

cc to Committee members:

[Senator Bill Hansell](#)

[Senator Arnie Roblan](#)

[Representative Daniel Bonham](#)

[Representative David Gomberg](#)

[Representative Pam Marsh](#)

[Representative Mike Nearman](#)