



*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.*

June 3, 2019

To: [House Committee on Rules](#)  
[Representative Paul Holvey, Chair](#)

Re: [HB 3441](#) Establishing a Voter Registration Task Force — **Support**

The League of Women Voters fought nearly 100 years ago for women's suffrage. We have not stopped working since! We inform voters about candidates and issues in English, Spanish, Braille, on audio recordings, in large font, on paper, online, and in person. We register voters and reach out with our online Civics Education used by students of all ages, by citizenship classes, at naturalization ceremonies, and for our Student Mock Elections. We support HB 3441 to form a voter registration task force.

We have worked on Oregon motor voter registration since it originally passed here 1989, adopted in 1991, and for Oregon's national leadership in *automatic, opt-out* motor voter registration in 2015, with [HB 2177](#), which [we strongly supported](#). We started with a cautious two-phase Department of Motor Vehicles test, meaning to expand to other agencies. The DMV roll-out has generally been recognized as successful. We agree it is time to thoroughly examine how to improve our voter registration rates.

In 2015, we cautioned that voter registration legislation carries responsibilities. It is essential that we inform newly registered voters. Oregon voter turnout already leads the nation. We need to examine voter registration, voter turnout and our opt-in party registration. Are we ready for same-day voter registration?

While Oregon's population has grown by about 240,000 since 2015, we have an additional 600 thousand more voters registered today than in 2015, before we started automatic registration, the "low-hanging, easy to reach fruit" through the DMV. Nearly half of those were automatically registered.

There has been concern that some voters may not realize they were registered and may not be as invested in voting, so relative voter turnout rates may drop. Comparing the 2014 to 2018 Oregon midterm election voter turnout, there was a drop, from 70.9% down to 68.45%. But there were 349,292 more votes in 2018. Heightened political awareness adds too, with 80.33% turnout for the 2016 general election.

We want to evaluate likely state agencies for expansion. Drivers' license renewal may not cue new voters for eight years. "Filer Voter" could cue annual taxpayer interactions with a voter registration confirmation and follow up where registration is needed. The Department of Transportation assured us in this session's [HB 2015](#) hearings that they identify drivers/citizens who qualify for voter registration. The Dept of Revenue would be similarly capable of distinguishing our considerable assets from immigrant taxpayers.

Our understanding was that political party registration was deferred to address software shortcomings. The "opt-in" party registration bears a close look. Default non-affiliated registrations may reflect more on a process fault than NAV loyalty.

We would relish the opportunity to examine this process. We urge your support. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Rebecca L. Gladstone in black ink.

Rebecca Gladstone  
LWVOR Governance Coordinator

References accessed May 30, 2019:

[Voter Registrations and Election Participation](#), Oregon Secretary of State Election Statistics.  
[Oregon population change, 2015 to 2019. World population review.](#)

[Automatic Voter Registration a “Success” in Oregon](#). New York Times, Dec 2, 2016

[Record number of Oregon voters submit ballots in 2018 midterm election](#). Nov 8, 2018.

[Filer Voter: Linking tax filing to voter registration](#). The Brookings Institution

[HB 2015 Testimony, Amy Joyce, Legislative Liaison, ODOT](#) , April 17, 2019

[What Immigration means to Oregon](#), 2018. American Immigration Council

[Oregon Voter Turnout History for General Elections](#), Oregon Elections Division.