

# OREGON TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

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**Testimony in Support of SB 761  
Before the House Committee on Rules  
Arthur Towers, Political Director  
Oregon Trial Lawyers Association  
June 20, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 761. I have been involved in initiative petition campaigns since 1982. I have participated in petition drives at every level, from volunteer signature gatherer to chief petitioner and everything in between.

The initiative process is a crucial part of our democracy. It is a critical tool for citizens to rein in government overreach, break gridlock in Salem, and advance important issues directly to the voters. I am proud that Oregon is one of the two dozen or so states that protect citizens' rights to petition their government.

Over the course of 38 years, I have seen the signature gathering process become monetized, weaponized and corrupted in a variety of ways. Each time, voters themselves or the legislature have risen to the challenge to protect the democratic process in a bi-partisan fashion.

SB 761 is simply the latest in a long string of vital efforts to preserve the sanctity of the initiative and referendum process.

Over the years, groups of all types have used the initiative process to advance issues. This bill, without an emergency clause, would affect everyone equally once it becomes effective.

Citizens need to have faith in the integrity of the initiative process if that tool is to work. SB 761 insures the accuracy and fairness of e-signature sheets.

Simply put, loopholes exist with these e-sheets that undermine the integrity and accuracy of our initiative process with how these sheets are being used now. It's our duty to protect this process by imposing safeguards on how they can be legally used.

The changes presented in SB 761 are common sense proposals that will decrease the potential for fraud and provide Oregonians added assurance that their initiative, referendum, and referral process is above reproach.

The Oregon Trial Lawyers Association urges your support of SB 761.