



My name is Mary Chaffin, and I live in Sisters, in Deschutes County, OR. I've lived in Oregon for 35 years and was married and raised two sons here.

I am writing not just on behalf of myself but also on behalf of Indivisible Sisters, a non-partisan grassroots organization that "champions democracy by building community through conversation and action." Today's hearing (3/18) before the Senate Rules Committee presents this body with the welcome opportunity to join Indivisible Sisters in championing democracy because you are considering four bills that will strengthen our democratic institutions. These four bills are: SJR 4, SB 261, SB 262, and SJR 3.

Oregon is one of only five states in the nation that require more than a simple majority for a quorum. Over the past two years Oregonians have watched in frustration as the people's business has been repeatedly interrupted by walk-outs that shut down the legislative session for lack of a quorum. Oregon's unusually high quorum requirement has been weaponized by the minority party to thwart the will of the majority party, who now hold every state office and three-fifth supermajorities in both the House and the Senate. Hundreds of bills, some supported by bipartisan majorities and including bills to restore forest health, to fund homeless shelters, to increase transparency in government, to expand community mental health treatment, to trim tax breaks for wealthy investors, and many more, have failed due to the disruptions and delays caused by six walk-outs in less than twenty-four months. <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2020/03/20-bills-that-died-in-oregon-legislature-after-republicans-walked-out.html> This hyper-partisan tactic has been extremely destructive to the functioning of our democratic institutions. It has also undermined Oregonians' belief that "elections have consequences" that should result in the advancement of the policy choices that the majority of the winning candidates campaigned on.

The four bills before the Rules Committee will, in a non-partisan fashion, restore Oregonians' trust in our elections to deliver the results that we have voted for. SJR 4 would refer to the voters an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to change the quorum requirement from 2/3 of the Legislature to a simple majority. This would eliminate the use of the quorum rule as a weapon to be used by either party, when it is in the minority. If SJR 4 is passed, and if the voters approve the amendment, the urgency of passing the other measures is greatly diminished.

However, we believe that these other measures should be enacted, in order to put a stop to the destructive, anti-democratic behavior that we have witnessed:

- SB 261 would prohibit members of Legislative Assembly from soliciting or using contributions to pay fines or legal expenses, replace salary, defray expenses or otherwise compensate members for monetary losses incurred as result of unexcused absences from sessions of Legislative Assembly.
- SB 262 would prohibit a member of Legislative Assembly who has an unexcused absence during a session from receiving salary, per diem or expense reimbursement, and would impose a fine of \$500 per day of unexcused absence. It would also prohibit political contributions from being used to pay fines or legal fees, replace salary or defray expenses.

- SJR 3 would propose an amendment to Constitution to provide that a member of the Legislature who, without permission or excuse, does not attend 10 or more scheduled legislative floor sessions of the Legislative Assembly is deemed to be engaging in disorderly behavior and is disqualified from holding office as Senator or Representative for the term following the member's current term of office.

These rules would apply equally to Democrats and Republicans who seek to abuse the system by walking out. Walking out on the job is a gross dereliction of duty and an insult to Oregon voters. Please pass these four bills and end this pernicious practice for good!