

Date: March 18, 2021
Re: Support for SB 261, 262, SJR 3, 4

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Girod, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

I write to support the set of bills seeking to protect the democratic legislative process for our state. There are so many urgent concerns facing our state this year, from COVID-19 to wildfire to racism, that it is essential our lawmakers stay focused on their work of public service.

I would prefer these bills not be necessary, and I would urge each lawmaker to consider how they can work in good faith across the aisle, whether or not these bills are passed. The voices of minority parties are valuable and should be heard. Equally important, minority parties cannot be permitted to halt an entire legislative session and veto the will of the majority of voters on an entire slate of issues.

It is not so much that I object to how some lawmakers decided to represent their constituents during the past years' long walk-outs, as that they chose actions that made it impossible for my legislators to represent me. The walk-outs silenced my voice, and erased the power of my vote, by bringing all legislative action to a halt. We have still not caught up on the time lost from these past sessions. Many important pieces of legislation were cast aside, leaving people without the help of their government in a time of crisis.

The right way for a minority party to halt a legislative trajectory they oppose is to advance a slate of policies and candidates that appeal to a majority of voters, and win a majority of legislative seats.

Oregonians had a chance to express their support for the walk-outs by electing a GOP majority in Salem. They didn't do that. The people's voice - in the most recent election - must be heard.

The democratic process is not perfect, but it is a sacred trust we share. These bills help solidify the expectations of lawmaker conduct and responsibility that allow voters' voices to be heard in Salem.

Democracy matters. Please support the bills SB 261, SB 262, SJR 3, and SJR 4.

Sincerely,
Audrey Zunkel-deCoursey