

5 April 2021

Madam Chair and members of the House Committee on Rules:

Please accept my testimony regarding House Bill 2499 up for hearing on April 6, 2021. Oregon has done a tremendous job of getting eligible Oregonians registered to vote. We have been a national leader and our percentage of voters eligible to register to vote that are actually registered is an astounding 93.7%: <https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/statistics/november-2020-statistical-summary-participation.pdf>

No matter how great a job election administrators do in Oregon, or any state, there will be a small percentage of eligible voters who will choose not to register and participate.

Those opting out of automatic registration at DMV is historically between 4-5%. In 2020 the percentage opting out was 5.1%. In 2019 it was 4.4%, and in 2018 it was 4.8%. <https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/registration/OMV-YearlyReports-2020.pdf>

If you take the 93.7% who are registered and add the average 4.8% who do not want to be registered and opt out that leaves less than 2% of Oregonians who are eligible to register to vote that are not registered. That is a great and amazing number.

Unfortunately, Oregon has changed course and is moving away from these successes. The 2019 Oregon Legislature significantly rolled back Oregon's pioneering automatic voter registration system when it passed HB 2015. This removed citizenship requirements (which are required by state and federal law to register to vote) for obtaining a driver's license and resulted in only those who apply for a Real ID license to be automatically registered. The vast majority of Oregonians getting a driver's license today are not being automatically registered because of this new law that took effect in January. This bill would be another step in the wrong direction as it would create many duplicate records that election professionals would have to process, especially any record that came from OHA with a driver's license. If a person has a driver's license and they are a citizen, they have already been automatically registered, or decided to opt out. Listen to the election experts which are Oregon's county election officials. They can explain the logistical problems in this bill and can probably even help you better achieve your goals of improved elections.

While I hope that the last 2% of eligible voters in Oregon will become registered and participate in our elections, registering in Oregon is very easy, although not as easy as it was before the 2019 legislation. This bill would be much more effective if instead it would focus on restoring automatic voter registration for citizens at DMV where there are signatures in those files that can be used for signature verification. It would also be more effective if the bill could improve the outdated election technology systems to better, and more securely, transfer data between agencies.

While the goal of increasing participation in Oregon elections is a good one, this bill will not really help. There are much bigger priorities to improve elections in Oregon that should be pursued instead. The funds necessary to have a system that securely transfers personal data between agencies would be much better spent modernizing Oregon's outdated election systems.

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