

April 7, 2021

Thank you again Chair Wagner and members of this committee for the opportunity to speak at your public hearing on SB 313. I would like to submit my comments in writing as well to account for anything I may have missed or stumbled over. My name is Farrah Chaichi, I am lifelong Washington county resident, elected Precinct Committee Person (PCP) of the Washington County Democratic party, and an elected delegate from my county to the Democratic Party of Oregon (DPO) State Central Committee (SCC).

The bill being considered here and the law that is currently in place are about principles of representative democracy. Under state law, SCC delegates are elected by their county PCPs to represent them in the highest authority of the state party, which is the SCC. Other delegates and I have been requesting principles of democracy be respected in the SCC for several years now and I believe that is the driving force for this bill under consideration. Rather than address our concerns the response has been to ignore, obfuscate, and now to simply rely on influence to change the law.

The way that the DPO operates is not in compliance with the current law and instead it operates as if this proposed bill is in already effect. The DPO has 29 voting members who are not elected by counties which this law is attempting to legitimize. Many of us refer to these particular members of the SCC as super delegates. 29 is larger than Multnomah county's delegation, and twice the size of our Washington county delegation. Each additional voting member added to the SCC dilutes the impact of the votes of delegates duly elected by our county central committees. These super delegates are officers, chairs of the Congressional District Committees, and Special Group Caucus delegates. Can you imagine what your constituents would say if they watched you add a number of special caucuses and each time you created a caucus you added one additional voting member to the legislature, further marginalizing their representation in the legislature?

I respectfully request that you consider where this bill came from and what its origins signify. I doubt Senator Beyer was reading ORS 248.075 one night and decided it needed to be updated to allow limitless additions to the highest authority of the state's major political parties. So did the request for this bill come from people in positions of power and influence? It should give you pause to consider what it means if existing power structures are using their influence and connections to ask for a change to the law while us little guys must request time off work to appear before this committee begging you to protect our rights to represent our counties, precincts, and fellow party members.

The people in power rely on "diversity" as cover for anti-democratic operating procedures often. That has been the case on this specific issue, which offends me as a woman of color, child of an immigrant and dual national citizen, especially when it is untrue on its face. Looking at the implementation of this practice, of the 29 super delegates 17 come from caucuses. Of those, only seven caucuses cover identities that are often considered to check "diversity" boxes. One of those caucuses covers women, and since gender representation is mandated from the county to national party level that leaves six of 29 super delegates who check those diversity boxes. That means 80% of the super delegates are not even there with the pretense to increase diverse representation. For example, I am a member of the gun owners caucus and a gun owner. Because I am a gun owner in a blue state some could argue that I am part of a marginalized population. However, that is not what is generally meant when people mention "diverse representation", yet we are given an additional voting delegate in the SCC. It is further untrue

that these caucuses' super delegates are required for representation in the SCC when you note that most caucuses already have members who are duly elected county delegates, such as myself.

Finally, the argument has been made that passing this law will give parties the opportunity to enact what they want to happen. But because the DPO is already operating as if this bill were in force, the party cannot actually choose to make this decision for itself. The decision was made before many of us were ever elected to the SCC. It is already a compromised system, which means the outcome will be compromised. Giving parties license to make new delegates when they have already broken the law to set up the power structure it is currently operating under is like expecting fair decisions to come from elections in gerrymandered districts.

I urge you to protect the principles of representative democracy, please do not pass this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Farrah Chaichi