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COMMENTS REGARDING HOUSE BILL 3021 DASH-2

Translations

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Representatives Bonham, Fahey, Salinas, and Zika,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some comments about House Bill 3021 and the Dash-1 amendments. The Oregon Association of County Clerks (OACC) appreciates Representative Pham and her team, Robin Ye, Michele Ruffin and Walter Consulting, for meeting with us on the Dash -2 amendment to HB 3021.

The Dash -2 amendment removes the fiscal from Counties, which is greatly appreciated, and places it on the Secretary of State. It also allows for staggering implementation for Counties based on population. It more clearly defines what the threshold is to qualify a language for translation and which content will be translated.

The Clerks appreciate the concept of making things easier for everyone to vote, but still have a few concerns regarding HB 3021:

1. While the Dash-2 amendment removes almost the entire financial burden of HB 3021 from county elections offices, there will still be a significant financial responsibility for the Secretary of State.
2. This bill is a significant step forward to improving language access for Oregon voters and should be matched by a significant increase in ongoing resources to support the program required by this bill. The underlying structure must be built before the program can be successful.
3. The Clerks appreciate that the requirements of the bill fall on the state and do not mandate similar services at the County level. However, OACC sees a high probability of this demand trickling down to the County level, based on past experiences. All Counties are under resourced.
4. Providing good translations takes time and the current timelines for producing voters' pamphlets are already tight. Candidate and voters' pamphlet filing deadlines would have to be moved back to accommodate the additional requirements of this bill while still hitting other federal and state deadlines.
5. The bill requires that bold 12-point font be printed on the cover of the voters' pamphlet advertising the translated, on-line versions. The Clerks would like to have more flexibility with layout of this advertising.
6. The Clerks appreciate that there is no mandate for printing the translated voters' pamphlets but also wanted to emphasize that the majority of the work in producing pamphlets is in the layout and creation.
7. OACC is concerned about the requirement to continue translating pamphlets into languages that no longer meet the threshold requirements established by the bill.
8. ORS 251.315 (2) may need to be revised as it states "The county clerk shall mail or otherwise distribute the county voters' pamphlet not later than the last day for mailing ballots" - we are not sure if a website meets the statutory obligation.

If the committee is interested in moving forward with this bill, OACC is willing to participate in further conversations about this concept and would support moving this concept into a workgroup where a thorough examination of all necessary resources could occur.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and comments.