



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 11, 2021

To: [House Committee On Rules](#)
[Representative Barbara Smith Warner](#), Chair

Re: [HJR 11](#) – Amends Oregon Constitution for same-day voter registration by referral – **Support**

The League of Women Voters has *protected and encouraged the civic duty of all citizens to vote*. This bill would amend the Oregon constitution, by referral to voters, to allow same-day voter registration. *The League continues to support shortening the period between registration and voting or same-day voter registration. LWVUS has worked with state Leagues interested in promoting such reforms. As a complement, not a substitute, for the NVRA, increased accessibility is integral to ensuring a representative electoral process and the right of every citizen to vote. LWVOR supports a registration cut-off requirement that does not disenfranchise otherwise qualified voters.*

This historical perspective is important because of a frightening power struggle over 1984 building code votes in Wasco County. The Rajneeshees, a small religious sect, planned to “take over the vote” to seat two sympathetic county commissioners to get their building codes. They would decrease opposition voter turnout by poisoning those voters with salmonella. Concurrently, they bussed in more than 2,300 transients, who traded voting support for care within the sect. Norma Paulus, then Secretary of State, invoked an emergency 20-day Oregon residency requirement rule and required personal appearances to determine the new registrant’s compliance. ¹ National attention for the legal proceedings ² ensued.

In 1991, the League supported an unsuccessful attempt to reduce the pre-election voter registration cutoff period from twenty to five days. This blackout period blocked voter access. Similar action in 1993 to protect voter access was also unsuccessful. Oregon had allowed voter registration up to and on election day in 1984. By 1986, Measure 13 passed, imposing a 20-day ban of voter registration. The Bend Bulletin recently recapped in 2020, saying this strange Oregon history didn’t make for great election law. ³

*“Oregonians supported Measure 13 that November [1986] by an overwhelming margin despite opposition from the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon **and other good-government groups**, which argued that the amendment would erode Oregonians’ voting rights unnecessarily. Remember, the Rajneeshees’ voting scheme was a flop”*

The League now supports and celebrates Oregon’s automatic voter registration, vote by mail with prepaid return envelopes, secure hand-marked paper ballots, and risk-limiting audits. Our main barrier to the ideal, top election ranking is the voter suppression period of barred voter registration. The League supports same-day voter registration. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

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1. [A Strange but True Tale of Voter Fraud and Bioterrorism](#); The 1984 Rajneeshee attack, which poisoned hundreds of Oregonians, shows how hard it is to steal an election—even with millions of dollars NS dedicated group. Scott Keyes, The Atlantic, June 10, 2014.
2. [Around the Nation: Judge Refuses to Back Sect's Voter Drive](#), New York Times, October 18, 1984.
3. [Oregon's election law's Rajneeshee hangover](#), Post-cult ballot measure changed law for the worse. Bulletin Editorial Board, The Bend Bulletin, March 23, 2018, updated January 31, 2020.