



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 25, 2021

To: [Senator Rob Wagner](#), Chair
[Senate Rules Committee](#)

Re: [SB 251](#) – ballot secrecy envelope update – **Support**

LWVOR supports efficient, secure elections, anticipating the need to adapt, to improve election methods and ballot-counting timelines. The Oregon County Clerks requested SB 251, an adjustment the League sees as a technical fix and also supports. To phrase positively, SB 251 would revise statute so that county clerks could, with Secretary of State approval, provide ballot secrecy, without using inner ballot sleeves.

The League sees several issues to address here.

- **Election efficiency.** Secrecy envelopes or sleeves shouldn't be used if they don't add privacy. They add work at multiple steps: initial printing, voter's time, and automated processing.
- **Government Economy.** Secrecy envelopes are deemed worthwhile if they add benefit. If not, costs add up for the paper, the printing, the insertion, transit costs in both directions, also the ballot opening process. The League supported pre-paid ballot mailing but we urge for ballot dropbox use, where possible, to curb mailing costs. If the sleeves or inner envelopes aren't needed, postage fees and accumulated costs can be lower.
- **Voter Confidence.** Any change in election processes must include voter education. Voters must know they can vote with confidence and that their privacy is protected.

Inner ballot envelopes have caused voter confusion and concern, enough to warrant this in the Secretary of State's [Voting Info, Frequently Asked Questions](#):

Will my ballot be counted if I forgot the secrecy envelope or sleeve?

The county elections office will maintain the privacy of your ballot if you forget the optional secrecy envelope or sleeve and your ballot will still count.

Is my vote really kept secret?

Yes, how you voted is secret, but whether or not you returned your ballot is public record. To ensure your vote remains a secret, your ballot is separated from the return identification envelope before it is reviewed.

Oregon can continue to lead the way with secure and efficient elections, using hand-marked, voter verifiable paper ballots. We voters can be confident that our voices are being heard, that our votes are being counted, efficiently, and with privacy. We recommend support for SB 251.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

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