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February 25, 2021

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Girod, members of the committee:

As Oregon's 28<sup>th</sup> Secretary of State and our chief elections officer, I am honored to lead the agency responsible for ensuring our elections are safe, fair, efficient, and accessible at all levels of the process. I would like to urge the committee to support Senate Bills 249, 250, and 251 because they would assist us in making our elections more efficient.

- SB 249 would allow ballots to be opened and counted when they are received rather than forcing County Clerks to wait until 7 days before the day of the election. This flexibility will allow County Clerks to avoid a backlog of ballots that build up with the current process.
- SB 250 would require County Clerks to establish regular business hours of at least 30 hours per week rather than the very prescriptive requirement currently in ORS 205.242.
- SB 251 would no longer require County Clerks to provide a secrecy sleeve for a ballot. With the development of opaque security envelopes, the secrecy sleeves are a duplicative measure that now slows down the ballot counting process and wastes paper.

These three concepts were introduced at the request of the Oregon Association of County Clerks. Our county clerks and elections staff work tirelessly to ensure that our democracy is safe, fair, and accessible. They understand our election processes better than anyone. They are the experts, working on the ground in 36 counties to make sure Oregon elections run smoothly. And when the experts make suggestions for improvement, I believe we should listen. I strongly encourage the Legislature to approve these technical changes and improve efficiency in Oregon election system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Fagan', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Shemia Fagan, Secretary of State

**Point of Contact:**

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