

SHEMIA FAGAN
SECRETARY OF STATE

CHERYL MYERS
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE



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Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Members of the committee:

For the record, I'm Shemia Fagan, and I'm honored to serve as Oregon's 28th Secretary of State. As Oregon's chief elections officer, our agency is responsible for upholding our democracy. I support the expansion of access to voting for adults in custody. Evidence suggests that when those who are incarcerated retain their right to vote, they remain more connected to society and recidivism rates are reduced. The simple act of voting and adding your voice to decisions about our democracy shows everyone that every person in our community, state, and country have a voice.

This is a civil rights issue. The facts are clear. Black, brown, indigenous, and people of color are overrepresented in our criminal justice system. This is not by chance. These are Jim Crow-era laws with the specific intent to target and bar people of color from voting. Nearly 10% of those who are incarcerated are veterans, 75% of the women are mothers. This includes about 15,000 people incarcerated statewide. Nationally the ACLU reports that, "As of 2016, 1 in 56- non-black voters lost their right to vote. Conversely, 1 in 13 black voters lost their right to vote."

Like many contentious issues, when you look to other states, there is a significant variance in how the policies are crafted. Currently, Vermont, Maine, the District of Columbia, and many countries (Canada, Israel, and South Africa to name a few) never disenfranchise voters. Oregon is among the 18 states that allow people to vote upon release. In 19 states, people are allowed to vote upon release, paying fines, fees, or restitution, and completion of parole and/or probation. Lastly, 11 states completely remove the right to vote on certain crimes, require a governor's pardon, implement an additional waiting period, or require additional steps to earn back the right to vote.

Ultimately, the work of deciding criminal sentencing law lies with the legislature. As Oregon's chief election officer, I am doing my best to lead with pro-democracy principles. Oregon has already taken the significant step in this direction years ago by allowing Oregonians with felony criminal convictions to vote upon completion of their sentence. SB 571 would take the final step in enfranchisement by allowing Oregonians to vote while serving their sentence, I urge your support.

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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