

HB 4144 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 2/15, 2/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Allows identified election workers to have residential address exempted from disclosure as public record by county clerk. Defines election worker as individual serving the state or any public body as an employee or volunteer who is performing duties and functions described in Oregon's elections statutes. Establishes that crime of harassment or aggravated harassment includes harassment against election worker. Punishes by maximum of five years' imprisonment, \$125,000 fine, or both. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Exempting personal addresses from public records requests
- Reasons for making harassment a felony
- Legislative conversations about increased penalties
- Goal to decrease threats to election workers

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Establishes that crime of harassment as a Class A misdemeanor includes harassment against election worker performing election worker's official duties or because of an action taken or decision made by election worker during performance of official duties. Removes crime of aggravated harassment as including harassment of election worker.

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact.

REVENUE: Minimal revenue impact

BACKGROUND:

A [June 2021 report](#) from the Brennan Center for Justice and the Bipartisan Policy Center found that one in three election officials feel unsafe because of their job, and nearly one in five listed threats to their lives as a job-related concern. The report proposes solutions, including recommending states pass new laws to provide greater protection of personally identifiable information, fund grants to purchase home intrusion detection systems, and provide funds for training and education related to maintaining greater personal security. The report also recommends that states prioritize efforts to coordinate swift investigation and, where appropriate, prosecute those responsible for threats to election workers.

In September 2021, [Reuters](#) documented 102 threats of death or violence received by more than 40 election officials, workers, and their relatives. The U.S. Department of Justice formed a task force to address the threats against election workers and in June 2021 issued a [guidance memo](#) highlighting the problem to federal prosecutors and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

House Bill 4144 allows election workers to exempt their residential address from disclosure as a public record and makes the crime of harassment or aggravated harassment against an election worker a Class C felony.