



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 102-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 8, 2022

To: [Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation](#)
[Senator Floyd Prozanski](#), Chair
[Senator Kim Thatcher](#), Vice Chair

Re: [SB 1584](#) – Compensation for wrongful convictions – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon strongly supports SB 1584, which creates a process for those who have been wrongly convicted to petition for compensation. We base our support on the individual liberties guaranteed by the US Constitution and our belief that no person should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination. We also point out that compensation for the wrongly convicted is a provision of numerous international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the American Convention on Human Rights (1969).

Underlying our support of SB 1584 is the acknowledgement that racial bias contributes significantly to the inequities and injustices in our criminal justice system. The numbers say it all. According to the US Census Bureau and the National Registry of Exonerations, although black Americans make up only 13% of the US population, they make up 40% of the prison population and almost 60% of all DNA exonerations in the country.

Currently, 37 states, the federal government, and Washington, D.C., have enacted laws that allow for the compensation of the wrongfully convicted. Passage of SB 1584 would mean that Oregon would no longer be one of the 13 states without such a law. According to UC Irvine’s National Registry of Exonerations, there have been nearly 3,000 exonerations in the US since 1989, with a total time served of 25,600 years, years that can never be regained by those exonerees. Twenty-three of those exonerations have occurred in Oregon, largely thanks to the work of the Oregon Innocence Project.

The bill provides that petitioners who meet the stipulated criteria will be awarded \$65,000 for every year of incarceration and \$25,000 for every year of parole or post-prison supervision, with a cost-of-living adjustment calculated annually. In addition, we are happy to see there is also reimbursement for attorney fees and court costs, as well as assistance for counseling, housing, medical care, education, job training, legal services, food, and transportation.

The League stands with the Innocence Project in its mission to obtain justice using DNA evidence to undo convictions based on faulty forensics, prosecutorial misconduct, or race and class discrimination. It is our hope that passage of SB 1584 will cause increased awareness of how and why wrongful convictions occur, create a clearly defined petition process for obtaining compensation, and ultimately strengthen our criminal justice system. The League urges an “aye” vote, and we thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President

Marge Easley
Jaime Carleton

LWVOR Action Committee