

HB 3028 Civic Duty Protections for Board and Commission Members

Oregon has over 250 boards and commissions that advise policy or serve as the rule making bodies for our state's agencies and programs. These boards and commissions are an important part of our government, ensuring citizen participation and oversight in how agencies develop and implement policies and rules. All who serve are volunteers and many people are able to serve in their professional capacities, as an extension of their work. While this ensures a level of expertise from members of our boards and commissions, it often means limiting who is able to participate. The people who are excluded from participation are likely our lower-wage workers and front line employees who wouldn't be expected to weigh in on policy and rule making. And like any other spaces working to become more inclusive and diverse, our boards, commissions, and committees are often very white.

Like juries, Oregon's boards and commissions should be reflective of our communities and include voices of people with an understanding of the real impacts of our rules and policies that guide our agencies' work. The best way to increase participation in this work is to reduce barriers to entry. The legislature took steps to help ensure that stipends for certain board, commission, and committee members who would experience financial hardships or barriers are available through the passage of HB 2992 in 2021. HB 3028 goes a step further by ensuring that employees are able to take time away from their jobs to attend meetings for their appointed position.

HB 3028 uplifts the act of serving on our state's boards, commissions, and committees as a civic duty by providing job protections for people serving as a commissioner or committee member. These are the same kinds of protections that are afforded to people serving jury duty, and while not as expansive as the protections that members of our military and elected officials receive, are just as important for elevating the role we all have in our democracy.

The protections are simple and mirror the statute for employer and employees regarding jury duty:

- Prohibition of the employer to fire, threaten to fire, discipline, intimidate or coerce an employee about the employee's position on the board or any scheduled events for that position.
- Prohibition of employer requiring the employee to use any accrued paid time off, vacation or sick time to attend meetings or scheduled events related to service for the position.
- Allows employees to take unpaid leave to attend meetings or events related to their service.
- Gives authority of complaint based investigation and enforcement to BOLI.

Please pass HB 3028 and provide our state's employees job protections that allow them to serve on Oregon's boards, commissions and committees and participate in shaping our policies and rules.



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