

April 6, 2023

Oregon Progressive Party

Position on Bills at 2023 Session of Oregon Legislature:



HB 3593: Support

The Oregon Progressive Party supports HB 3593, which would change the voting method for partisan offices in Oregon's general election to full fusion.

Under full fusion voting, while a candidate has multiple lines on the ballot, the voter is instructed to vote for that candidate on only one line, corresponding to the party that the voter prefers. No doubt some voters will make the error of voting for the same candidate more than once, as they get used to the new ballot. But HB 3593 resolves such an error by (1) counting the multiple votes as a single vote for the candidate and (2) assigning a single vote of credit to the smaller party marked by the voter.

There is no reason that full fusion voting could not work well with alternative voting methods, such as ranked choice voting (RCV) or score then automatic runoff (STAR) voting.

With fusion and RCV, the voter would also be instructed to rank the candidate only once, on the line corresponding with the voter's favored party. No doubt some voters will make the same type of error by ranking the same candidate more than once. But the RCV statute could easily resolve such an error by counting only the highest ranking assigned to the candidate by the voter and disregarding any lower rankings the voter assigned to the same candidate.

With fusion and STAR voting, the voter would also be instructed to rate the candidate on only one line, corresponding to the party that the voter prefers. No doubt some voters will make the same type of error by rating the same candidate more than once. But the STAR Voting statute could easily resolve such an error by counting only the highest rating assigned to the candidate by the voter and disregarding any lower ratings the voter assigned to the same candidate.

Full fusion voting would also improve the system for crediting votes to minor parties. Currently, a minor party (required to earn at least 1% of the vote in a statewide race at least every 4 years) gets no credit for the votes received by a candidate who is nominated by both a major party and a minor party. More important, the minor party gets no credit for votes received by a candidate who is nominated by more than one minor party, unless the minor party is the first one to nominate the candidate (once the window for such nominations opens 15 days

after the biennial primary election), regardless of the candidate's own party membership or preference.¹

HB 3593 partially solves this problem by allowing a candidate to have up to 3 lines on the ballot, corresponding to 3 party nominations. Then the voter chooses which party receives credit by voting for the candidate on that party's line. If a voter makes the error of voting for the same candidate more than once, then the credit goes to the smaller of those parties.

It is not clear whether HB 3593 would override ORS 248.008(8), which states:

(8) An affiliation of electors or a minor political party may not nominate a candidate who is the nominee of another political party at the same election in order to satisfy the one percent requirement referred to in subsection (1)(b) or (4)(b)(B) of this section.

This current law is ambiguous. It appears to refer to the motivation of the minor party and somehow precludes the minor party from cross-nominating a major party candidate based on such motivation. It has been interpreted, however, as excluding any credit to the minor party for any candidate also nominated by a major party. It is not clear whether HB 3593 would allow any credit to a minor party in that circumstance; an amendment could clarify that. It would be a significant improvement to existing law, even if it allowed no such credit.

The Oregon Progressive Party urges enactment of HB 3593.

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Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Daniel Meek

Daniel Meek
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Oregon Progressive Party

1. The minor parties which are currently required to earn the 1% statewide vote are the Constitution Party and the Progressive Party. The current threshold for avoiding the 1% requirement is 7,453 registered members of the minor party. The Pacific Green Party currently has 7,853 members and thus avoids the 1% requirement by 400 members. The Working Families Party currently has 8,401 members and thus avoids the 1% requirement by 948 members. As the automatic motor voter registration system continues to significantly increase the overall number of Oregon registered voters (automatically registering them as "nonaffiliated," unless they specify otherwise in writing), the 7,453 threshold will continue to increase and could exceed the membership levels of those other minor parties, thus requiring that each of them earn also 1% of the vote in a statewide race.