

SB 1577 -3 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/13, 2/15

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure extends automatic vote registration to applicants for admission to public institutions of higher education. The measure also requires the Department of Revenue to provide the Secretary of the State with records containing information related to voter registration.

Detailed Summary:

Sections 1-2

Defines key terms. Directs the Secretary of State (Secretary) to establish by rule a schedule for each public institution of higher education to provide the Secretary records of each person who is eligible to be a qualified elector under Article II, Section 2, of the Oregon Constitution. Prohibits a public institution of higher education from transferring records to the Secretary demonstrating that a person is not a citizen of the United States. Directs the Secretary to develop a process to obtain any missing registration information from the Department of Transportation for each person whom the public institution of higher education does not provide all registration information. Permits the Secretary to use this information for the purpose of registering a person to vote. Prohibits the Department of Transportation from providing information to the Secretary if the records show that a person is not a citizen of the United States. Directs the Secretary to provide registration information obtained under this section to the county clerk in which each person may be registered as an elector and requires the Secretary or county clerk to notify each person of the process to decline being registered as an elector or adopt a political party affiliation. Specifies that 21 days after the notifications have been provided, if a person has not declined to register as an elector, the person's registration is complete. Limits the types of person information and use of the personal information that may be transferred from public institutions of higher education or the Department of Transportation to the Secretary.

Section 3

Directs the Department of Revenue to provide electronic records to the Secretary of State as identified by the Secretary in rule.

Sections 4-5

Modifies definition of "registration card."

Sections 6-7

Specifies that a qualified person may register to vote or update a registration to vote by submitting some or all of the person's registration information to a public institution of higher education in a manner that allows the county clerk to register the person to vote or update the person's voter registration.

Sections 10-11

Requires the Department of Transportation and each public institution of higher education to take reasonable necessary steps to allow transfer of voter registration information by electronic or magnetic medium.

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Potential challenges with data sharing
- Validation of data as opposed to data sharing
- History of automatic voter registration
- Eligibility criteria to vote in Oregon

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-3 Replaces the measure. The measure requires the Director of the Legislative Policy and Research Office to study the viability, benefits, and challenges of public institutions of higher education providing the Secretary of State (Secretary) with electronic records containing data from applicants seeking admission to the institutions for the purpose of aiding the Secretary in determining the applicants' eligibility as qualified electors, and in registering those applicants that are eligible as electors. The measure also requires the Director to study the viability, benefits, and challenges of the Department of Transportation providing missing registration information for these same applicants to assist the Secretary in determining their eligibility as qualified electors and in registering those that are eligible as electors. The Director must also study the Secretary's use of the information provided by the Department of Transportation and public institutions of higher education to facilitate greater voter registration and participation in elections in Oregon. A report on the study and findings must be provided to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to rules by October 1, 2026. Finally, the measure takes effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

BACKGROUND:

In register to vote in Oregon, you must be a citizen of the United States, a resident of Oregon, and at least age 16. If a person is not yet age 18, they will not receive a ballot until an election occurs on or after their 18th birthday. Automatic voter registration (AVR) is a process where eligible voters are automatically registered to vote when they interact with certain government agencies, most commonly as an opt-out process following interactions with the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices. In 2016, Oregon became the first state to automatically register eligible citizens who are not currently registered to vote when they apply for an original, renewal, or replacement driver license, permit, or identification card through the DMV. House Bill 2177 (2015) required the Oregon Department of Transportation to provide the Elections Division of the Secretary of State with the electronic records of each person who may be eligible to vote after certain interactions with the DMV. The law, known as "Oregon Motor Voter," was enacted by the Legislative Assembly to modernize the federal "Motor Voter Act" that required DMVs in most states to offer voter registration services, primarily by asking customers if they would like to register to vote.

Senate Bill 1577 extends automatic vote registration to applicants for admission to public institutions of higher education. The measure also requires the Department of Revenue to provide the Secretary of the State with records containing information related to voter registration.