

Submitter: Peter Bergel
On Behalf Of: Oregon PeaceWorks
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HJR3

Testimony of Peter Bergel on HJR 3

Members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Bergel. I live in Salem and in 1980 I directed a successful statewide initiative campaign which put in place a law that is still benefiting Oregonians today.

We organized this initiative campaign because the 1979 Legislature, in its last few hours, killed the measure that would have made the initiative unnecessary.

If anyone in this state knows how difficult it is to qualify an initiative for the ballot in Oregon without big money backing, and how difficult it is to pass such a measure when opposed by big money, I am that person.

Finding ways to make this process even more difficult is a thinly veiled attempt to ensure that the people of this state have even fewer tools to enact the public's will than they currently do. Oregon is fortunate to even have the initiative process. Many states do not. It was put in place to allow the people to make laws directly when the Legislature fails to act.

For members of the Legislature to seek to take away, or further restrict, that ability is a transparent power grab. Legislators who have the public's good in mind should vote against it. I hope that means the members of this committee.

I'm sure the authors of this measure claim the goal is to ensure that people who live in rural counties far from the population centers will have an equal say in government policy. They already have an equal right to vote for or against an initiative if it makes the ballot. They should not have the right to make it more difficult for citizens to bring a question before the electorate by virtue of where they choose to live.

Please vote no on referring this measure to a floor vote or to another committee.