



**To:** House Committee on Rules  
**From:** Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN)  
**Re: IN OPPOSITION TO HJR 3**  
**Date:** March 9, 2025

*Chair Bowman, Vice-Chair Drazen, Vice-Chair Pham, and Members of the House Committee on Rules:*

The Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN), representing thousands of Oregonians in more than 50 Indivisible groups from all corners of the state, **strongly opposes HJR 3**. The Indivisible Project began as an effort to help ordinary citizens engage in the democratic process and defend threats to democracy. We believe this bill is a threat to democracy, making it more difficult than it already is for citizens to bring about desired change.

The initiative process is one of the primary tools for citizens to make or change laws. HJR3 would change the **current requirement based on a percentage of total statewide votes** cast for all candidates for Governor in the preceding gubernatorial election to a **new requirement based on a percentage of total county-wide votes** cast for all candidates for Governor in the preceding gubernatorial election. This will dramatically impact not only the feasibility of signature-gathering, but also the fairness of the process, even though the percentages wouldn't change.

First, regarding feasibility: It should be obvious that gathering the required percentage of signatures in rural counties would be so much harder than in urban counties, primarily due to fewer people spread over much larger areas. Signature-gathering for initiative petitions is already an extremely difficult and expensive task, as evidenced by how few of those filed actually qualify for the ballot. HJR3 would make the citizens' initiative process nearly impossible, both from a practical and a financial standpoint. It seems to us that the sponsors of this bill seek to simply eliminate a primary tool of citizens to influence state law.

Second, regarding fairness: While COIN recognizes that people in rural counties often feel their voices are not heard at the state level, we believe that HJR3 would grant citizens in rural counties an out-sized voice when it comes to the initiative process, upending the democratic principle of one-person-one-vote. Imagine if citizens in one rural county, for some reason, strongly opposed a particular initiative. That one county

could, effectively, keep an otherwise very popular initiative off the ballot for everyone in the state. And it goes both ways. If the people of Multnomah County strongly objected to an initiative that might benefit all other counties of Oregon, the urban-dwellers could likewise veto the initiative. It doesn't take too much imagination to think about recent successful ballot measures, brought to voters by the initiative process, that could have easily been thwarted by one county representing a very small fraction of the electorate.

As legislators, you surely know that the Oregon Supreme Court has recognized two "co-equal" law-making bodies in our state: The Legislature and The People. Surely you must also know that any effort to make it harder for The People to make or change laws is inherently anti-democratic. At a time when democracy is facing so many threats at the national level, we must do everything we can to defend it here in Oregon.

**Please DO NOT PASS HJR 3.**

Respectfully,

Deborah Ferrer, The Dalles

on behalf of the Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN)

[www.coinoregon.org](http://www.coinoregon.org)