

Submitter: Katie Baltzor

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HJR11

My husband and I own a family cattle rancher in Eastern Oregon. We have witnessed too many ballot measures written intentionally vague or without any knowledge of the true impacts of the passage to Oregonians. Many of these are crafted by extreme groups that have a specific agenda that would be harmful to specific livelihoods, such as ours. Many conservative and moderate Eastern Oregonians feel they do not have a voice in the legislative or initiative process. It is too easy for these groups to gather all the signatures they need for a ballot initiative by going to a highly populated area. Gathering signatures in one region of our state does not show true representation of the perspectives of our diverse population. This is especially true of initiatives which affect agriculture. Most individuals residing in cities have absolutely no knowledge of the business of ranching or farming. A prospective initiative may look good on the surface, but could have a real negative impact on agriculture. Ranching and farming isn't something that just anyone can succeed in or an occupation which can be learned from a book only. Agriculture is vital to Oregon's economy, yet we are continually adversely affected by legislation and initiatives with no thought to the larger picture of the rural areas of our state.

Oregon currently requires a small number of signatures to become a voting item. Our constitution setting the requirements for gathering signatures has not been updated since 1968, yet Oregon population has grown and diversified. Increasing the requirement to a minimum of 8% of total votes cast in the last gubernatorial election for statutory initiatives signatures and 10% for constitutional amendments is minimal. The highlight of HJR11 is to require equal distribution of these signatures in every congressional district. While this is an inconvenience for signature gatherers that are used to using highly populated areas to meet the requirement, this ensures those of us in rural areas have some representation.

I strongly urge your support on HJR 11!