Submitter:	Jeff Mapes
On Behalf Of:	individual
Committee:	House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	HB3166

I covered politics in Oregon for many years for The Oregonian and Oregon Public Broadcasting. It became clear to me that our primary system increasingly does not well serve Oregonians because so many voters are registered as non-affiliated and cannot vote in the Democratic or Republican primaries. Supporters of the current system say it is easy for voters to register in one of the parties. That is true. But voters increasingly do not see themselves as members of a political party. And most voters are now registered automatically through DMV, and many pay little attention to the details. The truth is that the average citizen is busy with their life and tends not to pay much attention to politics until an election nears.

Given that, I think it's important to have an open primary that gives voters an opportunity to choose among all of the candidates. irrespective of party. I think there are several ways to do that. I worked with the group, All Oregon Votes, on a proposed constitutional measure that would require that all state-funded elections provide full access to all voters and candidates. The Legislature would be empowered under this measure to choose a replacement system.

That measure did not get enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. I would support having the Legislature refer that measure to the ballot. I also support legislative action to create a system along the lines of HB 3166.

It is not healthy for democracy to have a shrinking percentage of the electorate choose the major-party nominees, many of whom go on to face little opposition at the general election. In many ways, I think this is an issue of social justice. Voters who are younger and poorer are often those who are most disenfranchised by our closed primary system.