Submitter: TOM MESSENGER

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3166

HB 3166-2 Testimony

Opposing

1. Good part of the bill – Elimination of the Precinct Committee Person (PCP) elections which are internal only elections for the Democrat and Republican parties and not responsible to the voters of Oregon. This will decrease the workload on the County Clerks which is sorely needed in the Primary election process.

2 Bad Parts of the bill:

a. ORS 249.048 actually needs to be improved not eliminated. As is, ORS 249.048 is out of sync with current Oregon voter registration and political parties. ORS 249.048 needs to be strengthened, stating that NO candidate (of any party or non-party) who runs in the Primary and fails to receive the nomination can run for the same position in the General election for any party or non-party. By eliminating ORS 249.048, this opens the door for any candidate of any party or no-party to run again in the general election. Thus, the purpose of the primary is thwarted and the value significantly decreased. Let’s get the law updated to today’s world.

Current ORS 249.048:

A candidate for nomination of a major political party to a public office who fails to receive the nomination may not be the candidate of any other political party or a nonaffiliated candidate for the same office at the succeeding general election. The filing officer may not certify the name of the candidate.

b. "Voter Choice" is a term used several times in the proposed system. That is a great concept and a great phrase!!! Let's make sure that, in fact, the elections are voter choice. The voters choose who moves on to the General Election. Not the parties, not the candidates, not signature gathering but the voters in the primary.

c. All candidates, whether party affiliated or not, must be required to run in the Primary. That's the equal fair just way to do the Primary. After all, the purpose of the primary is, by voter choice, to decrease the number of candidates in the General Election. The parties must not be given a choice of when to run their candidates. Everyone (all parties and all independents) run in the Primary. Folks who did not run

in the primary election can run as write-ins (or write-ins could be eliminated!) in the General Election.

d. No gathering signatures to get on the general election ballot. Again, this thwarts voter choice deciding who is on the ballot in the General Election.

e. Actually, what's happening here is that the proposed system is called an "Open Primary" but as proposed is not an open primary. Parties and candidates instead of voters determine who is in the general election and thus thwarts the voters choosing who is in on the ballot in the General Election which is the purpose of the Primary Election. Basically, it is an “Open General Election” which I oppose.

f. Just to clarify, the national Open Primaries group does not support this bill. I spoke with John Opdycke, president of Open Primaries, on Friday March 14, 2025 and he clearly stated that they are aware of the bill and do not support the bill.

3. Legislative choices for HB 3166-2:

a. Do not move forward with the bill. Simplest and easiest but no improvement in the election process.
b. Remove everything from the bill except eliminating the PCP elections. Simple and very valuable.
c. Remove everything from the bill except eliminating the PCP elections and updating ORS 249.048. Perhaps the best choice. Makes two solid fairness and equality improvements in the primary election process.
d. Democratic and Republican parties, in an act of Bi-Partisanship and cooperation, agree to NOT run candidates in PCP elections in the 2026 primary thus decreasing the effort by the County Clerks.. A bill would be planned to be submitted to the 2026 legislative session permanently removing the PCP elections and providing the improvement to ORS 249.048.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Messenger
Pacific City