Testimony for Oregon HB 3166 (2025) – Presidential Primary Timing

Referencing Section 42, Part 3 of the Introduced Text

Chair, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to express my support for HB 3166 which takes a crucial step toward making Oregon's elections more representative of its voters. By shifting away from a system that prioritizes party allegiance over voter choice, this bill will help ensure that elections are more about Oregonian's voices rather than political party control.

However, my testimony today focuses on Section 42, Part 3 of the introduced text which originally proposed scheduling Oregon's presidential primary on the second Tuesday in March during presidential election years. However, I have seen that a proposed amendment removes this section entirely and I would like clarification on:

1. **Has the timing of Oregon's presidential primary been officially removed from the bill?**
2. **Is the Legislature still considering setting a specific date for the presidential primary in this legislation?**

If the timing of the presidential primary is still under consideration, I strongly urge the Legislature to **move Oregon's presidential primary to the FIRST Tuesday in March (Super Tuesday)** to ensure that our voters have a meaningful impact in selecting presidential nominees.

Why Super Tuesday Matters for Oregon

Currently, Oregon's May presidential primary is too late to have a meaningful influence in the national election. By that time, the field has typically already narrowed to one candidate per party, and Oregon voters are left ratifying decisions already made by early primary states rather than actively shaping the race. Even moving the primary to the second Tuesday in March would be insufficient because it still places Oregon after Super Tuesday, when roughly one-third of all delegates are awarded, and the race is often all but decided.

Why Oregon Should Vote on Super Tuesday (First Tuesday in March)

- Super Tuesday sets the trajectory of the primary—states with later primaries have significantly less influence.
- Many candidates drop out if they perform poorly on Super Tuesday, meaning a second Tuesday in March primary would still leave Oregon with fewer choices.
- Most nominees are effectively decided by early March, making primaries after Super Tuesday largely symbolic.
- Oregon deserves to be an early primary state, giving its voters a meaningful role in shaping the national race, rather than being sidelined as spectators.

Benefits of Moving to Super Tuesday (First Tuesday in March) would:

- ✓ Gives Oregonians a real say in the nomination process while the candidate field is still competitive.
- ✓ Ensures that Oregon voters help shape the national race.
- ✓ Positions Oregon as a key player in national elections, increasing candidate engagement with our state.

Historical Evidence That Super Tuesday Determines the Race

- Since 1984, every Democrat who won Super Tuesday has secured the nomination—except one (Gary Hart, 1984 who dropped out of the race).
- Since 1988, every Republican who won a majority of Super Tuesday states went on to win the nomination.
- 2000: Both Al Gore and George W. Bush secured their nominations on Super Tuesday.
- 2008: John McCain effectively secured the GOP nomination even before Super Tuesday, while Barack Obama's momentum from Super Tuesday victories helped him win in June.
- 2020: Joe Biden became the clear Democratic nominee after Super Tuesday when Bernie Sanders dropped out.
- 2024: Nikki Haley ended her campaign on Super Tuesday, meaning Oregon voters never had a meaningful chance to support her. Just one week later (March 12), Donald Trump became the presumptive GOP nominee again showing how decisive Super Tuesday is.
- In 2024, nearly 50% of Republican and 42% of Democratic delegates were awarded before the second Tuesday in March.

HB 3166 Strengthens Oregon's Democracy

Beyond the presidential primary issue, HB 3166 represents a shift toward a more voter-centric election system. By adopting a unified primary system, this bill ensures that:

- Every voter, regardless of party affiliation, can have a say in who represents them.
- Candidates must appeal to the broader electorate, rather than just partisan bases.
- Elections become more about Oregonian's voices, rather than internal party politics.

Final Recommendation

I support HB 3166 and strongly urge the committee to retain the scheduling of the presidential primary within the legislation. Furthermore, I encourage you to move Oregon's presidential primary to the First Tuesday in March (or Super Tuesday) to ensure that Oregon voters have a real say in choosing presidential nominees.

This change will empower Oregon voters, strengthen our state's role in the national elections, and align with the bills goal of making elections about voters rather than party allegiance. This date also complies with national party rules ensuring Oregon maintains full delegate representation.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Courtney Russell