Submitter:	Becca Phelps
On Behalf Of:	
Committee:	House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	HB3166

Oregon prides itself on being a leader in democracy, yet our election system remains outdated and exclusionary. Of Oregon's more than 1.2 million voters, 43% (1.3M) are disenfranchised and excluded from primary elections simply because they are not registered with a political party. This percentage is higher than the 34% registered Democrats and the 25% of registered Republicans. Oregon is not alone in excluding unaffiliated voters, but it is one of the few remaining states with a fully closed primary system. In 2024, 22 states held closed presidential primaries or caucuses, disenfranchising more than 27 million independent voters.1 This needs to change. This is why I urge Oregonians to support HB 3166-2, the Unified Primary Act, which would ensure every registered voter has a voice in our state's primaries.

As the Oregon State Director of Vote Run Lead Action, I work with women and gender-expansive individuals from diverse political backgrounds, who aspire to run for office and lead their communities. The current system prevents many qualified candidates —especially women —from even participating in primaries. Opening primaries helps combat gender biases that can plague closed-party systems. Research shows that women are more likely to run and win in open primaries, where all voters can participate. HB 3166-2 would end these restrictions—allowing all voters and all candidates to participate in our election process—on the same primary ballot. The top two vote-getters advance to the general election, regardless of their party and increase competition and accountability.

Oregon's primary elections are publicly funded, yet nearly half of our voters must register with a party to participate. That is not democracy—it's exclusion. Unlike California and Washington's 'Top 2' systems, Oregon's Unified Primary Act allows only officially endorsed candidates to display party labels on the ballot, preventing party label hijacking.

This bill is about fairness, voter empowerment, and a strengthening our democracy. It's time to move forward and ensure every voter has an equal say. I urge lawmakers to pass HB 3166-2. Join our coalition for fair representation and learn more at www.electionreform.info

Sincerely,
Becca Phelps
State Director, Oregon
Vote Run Lead Action