Dear Chair and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Derek Clevenger, and I am a veteran, a former mayor of Aumsville Oregon, and a proud Oregonian who has dedicated my life to public service. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3166, which proposes the implementation of a unified primary election system in Oregon.

As someone who has served in both the military and local government, I have witnessed firsthand the importance of inclusive and participatory democratic processes. Our current closed primary system excludes a significant portion of our electorate—specifically, the 38% of Oregon voters who are registered as non-affiliated.

These citizens are effectively barred from participating in the selection of candidates who will appear on the general election ballot, leading to a sense of disenfranchisement and reduced voter engagement. HB 3166 addresses this issue by allowing all candidates, regardless of party affiliation, to compete in a single primary open to all voters. This change ensures that every Oregonian has an equal voice in the electoral process, thereby strengthening the foundation of our democracy.

As a Veteran, I have worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of our veterans are heard throughout our political process. Some estimates show that nearly 60% of Veterans are registered as non-affiliated voters or independents. Our current closed primary disenfranchises them and limits the voice of those who have given the most to our State and our Country.

In my tenure as mayor of a rural town, I learned the value of leaders who are accountable to all their constituents, not just a select group of party affiliates. The proposed open primary system encourages candidates to appeal to a broader spectrum of voters, fostering moderation and reducing the extreme partisanship that often hampers effective governance. By advancing the top five candidates to the general election, HB 3166 increases competition and incentivizes candidates to address the diverse concerns of all Oregonians, leading to more balanced and representative policymaking.

Oregon has a rich history of pioneering democratic reforms that prioritize the will of the people over partisan interests. Implementing a unified primary system aligns with our state's tradition of innovation and independence. It empowers voters to make choices based on the merits of the candidates rather than party labels, encouraging a more thoughtful and informed electorate.

HB 3166 represents a significant step toward creating a more inclusive, accountable, and representative electoral system in Oregon. As a veteran committed to defending

democratic principles and a former mayor dedicated to serving all constituents, I believe this bill will enhance our democracy and better serve the interests of all Oregonians. I respectfully urge the committee to support HB 3166 and recommend its passage.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Derek Clevenger

Master Sergeant (Retired)

Former Mayor, Aumsville Oregon