

Submitter: Jessica Holsen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210
Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 210

Submitted to the Oregon Senate Committee on Rules
Chair Jama, Vice Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

Introduction

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 210, which seeks to make in-person voting on Election Day the standard method for conducting elections in Oregon while limiting vote-by-mail options and imposing stringent identification requirements. I believe this bill undermines the accessibility and inclusivity that have been the hallmarks of Oregon's electoral system for decades.

Background on Oregon's Vote-by-Mail System

Oregon has been a pioneer in implementing a universal vote-by-mail system, which has significantly increased voter participation and streamlined the electoral process. This system allows voters to receive and return their ballots by mail, providing ample time to consider their choices and participate in elections without the constraints of a single Election Day. The success of this approach has positioned Oregon as a national leader in promoting accessible and secure voting practices.?

Concerns Regarding Senate Bill 210

Reduced Accessibility: Mandating in-person voting as the default method disproportionately affects individuals with disabilities, elderly voters, those with demanding work schedules, and residents in rural areas who may face challenges reaching polling stations. The current vote-by-mail system accommodates these voters effectively, ensuring that all Oregonians have an equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process.?

Voter Identification Requirements: The bill's requirement for voters to present valid government-issued identification when voting in person or requesting a mail-in ballot introduces unnecessary barriers. Studies have shown that such requirements can disenfranchise eligible voters, particularly among marginalized communities who may lack the specified forms of ID.?

Elimination of State-Paid Postage: Removing the provision for state-paid postage on mail-in ballots places an additional burden on voters that could deter participation, especially among low-income individuals.?

Conclusion

Senate Bill 210 represents a significant step backward for voting accessibility in Oregon. By dismantling the proven vote-by-mail system and imposing restrictive measures, this legislation threatens to disenfranchise countless voters and erode the inclusive democracy that Oregonians have long championed. I urge you to oppose SB 210 and to continue supporting policies that make voting as accessible and equitable as possible for all citizens.