

Damon Stevens

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Regarding SB 210 – Senate Committee on Rules

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My name is Damon Stevens, and I am a resident of Milwaukie, Oregon. I am testifying today in opposition to SB 210, which establishes in-person voting on the date of an election as the standard method of voting during an election. As a disabled veteran, I am deeply concerned about the potential impacts this bill could have on voter access, particularly for those with public health concerns and for individuals with limited resources.

For me and many other Oregonians—particularly the elderly, disabled veterans, individuals living with disabilities, hourly employees, and low-income residents—accessing physical polling places can be a serious challenge, especially during inclement weather or public health emergencies. Additionally, countless people working multiple jobs rely on vote-by-mail as a practical and accessible way to participate in our democracy without facing time and transportation barriers.

We cannot forget the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic. With growing concern over the rise of infectious diseases and a potential rollback of research and vaccine access under new federal leadership, preserving the mail-in voting system is a critical safeguard—especially when it allows all voters to cast their ballots without having to request a ballot by mail no later than 21 days before the election. Oregon’s current system protects both public health and civic participation.

I felt compelled to testify because this bill creates barriers instead of breaking them down. Our democracy works best when participation is easy, secure, and inclusive. Oregon’s vote-by-mail system has long been a model of efficiency and integrity, and moving away from it would be a step backwards for access and equity.

I urge the Senate Committee on Rules—and committee members—to reject SB 210. Instead of limiting access, we should be reinforcing our vote-by-mail system to ensure that every eligible Oregonian has an equal opportunity to be heard.