

Submitter: Jasmine Cardenas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

Testimony Against Senate Bill 210

Dear Members of the Oregon State Legislature,

I am writing to strongly oppose Senate Bill 210 (SB 210), which proposes significant changes to Oregon's voting system, including mandating in-person voting and instituting stricter voter identification requirements. These changes would undermine Oregon's reputation for accessible, inclusive elections and could disenfranchise many eligible voters.

Impact on Voter Accessibility

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has been a model of accessibility, ensuring that all eligible voters can participate regardless of personal circumstances. Requiring in-person voting as the standard method would create unnecessary barriers for many Oregonians, especially those with disabilities, elderly individuals, and those living in rural areas where polling places may be far from home. For these groups, the in-person requirement could mean the difference between voting or not voting.

Additionally, many voters with work or family responsibilities may not be able to take time off during limited polling hours. The flexibility that mail-in voting provides allows individuals to vote on their own schedules, reducing the burden on those who would otherwise struggle to make it to a polling location. Moving away from this option could discourage participation and exclude certain segments of our population from the democratic process.

Voter Identification Requirements

SB 210's proposed requirement for government-issued identification at the polls creates further barriers for many Oregonians, particularly marginalized groups. Low-income voters, people of color, elderly citizens, and those living in rural areas may not have easy access to the required ID. Many eligible voters may be discouraged from voting because of this requirement, effectively disenfranchising those who already face challenges in accessing resources.

Oregon's current system, which allows voters to cast their ballots by mail, ensures that ID is not a barrier to voting. This proposed ID requirement seems unnecessary, especially since there is no substantial evidence of widespread voter fraud in Oregon.

Instituting such a requirement would not improve election security but would instead impose a costly and restrictive measure that hurts the very people our democratic system aims to protect.

Financial Burden on Voters

The proposal to remove state-paid postage for mail-in ballots is another troubling aspect of SB 210. Removing this provision would place an undue financial burden on voters, especially those from low-income backgrounds. While postage costs may seem small to some, for many Oregonians, the cost of mailing a ballot could be a deterrent. A small fee for postage could create a financial hurdle for those who are already struggling to make ends meet, undermining the principle that voting should be free and accessible for all.

Conclusion

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has allowed our state to lead the nation in voter participation and inclusivity. SB 210 threatens to roll back these gains, making voting less accessible for people with disabilities, the elderly, low-income individuals, and those living in rural areas. The bill also introduces unnecessary barriers such as voter ID requirements and the removal of paid postage, which would disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

I urge the Legislature to reject SB 210 and continue to uphold Oregon's commitment to fair and inclusive elections. We should be making it easier, not harder, for all Oregonians to exercise their right to vote.