

HJR 201 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

Prepared By: Melissa Leoni, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/5

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure proposes an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to be submitted at the November 2026 general election. It provides that a registered Oregon elector may not be denied the right to vote in any primary election in Oregon solely because they are registered as unaffiliated with any political party. It requires all candidates for United State Senator, Representative in Congress, Governor, Secretary of State (SOS), State Treasurer, Attorney General, state Senator, state Representative, and any other office that requires a primary election, except President of the United States, to be listed on a single primary ballot regardless political party affiliation. It specifies that the top two candidates are nominated to the general election, and allows a political party to decline to participate in a primary election and nominate candidates to the general election if it meets specified requirements. It allows candidates to request whether the SOS prints the name of up to three political parties who have officially endorsed the candidate next to their name on any ballot or election information, and prohibits a political party from endorsing any candidate until it adopts and follows specified rules in making the endorsement. It also provides that an assembly of electors not greater than one-tenth of one percent (.10 percent) of all active registered voters is designated a minor political party.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

There are two types of public offices in Oregon, partisan, and nonpartisan. Partisan offices include United States (U.S.) President, U.S. Senator, Representative in Congress, Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Attorney General, state Senator, and state Representative. Candidates for partisan office may run as the nominee of a major or minor political party or as nonaffiliated candidates. Major party candidates must win the primary election to then run in the general election. Minor party and nonaffiliated candidates qualify for the ballot without running in the primary election; they first run for office at the general election. Nonpartisan offices include Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries, judge (Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Tax Court, and Circuit Court), and District Attorney. Candidates for nonpartisan office do not run as the nominee of a political party. All candidates for nonpartisan office must run in the primary election and the office may be won at this election.

Candidates may be nominated by multiple political parties. Candidates nominated by more than one party or by other nominating processes may select up to three parties or designations to be printed with their name on the general election ballot. Major political parties nominate candidates for partisan office at the primary election. A minor political party may nominate candidates for any partisan office within the electoral district in which the party is established for the general election immediately following formation. It may hold a nominating convention either under state law or under party by-laws, but the nominating process must provide equal opportunity for all registered party members to participate in selecting nominees or selecting the delegates who will make the nominations.

A minor political party can maintain ballot access in one of two ways:

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.

1. maintain voter registration equal to one-quarter of one percent of the total number of registered electors in the state as members of the party; or
2. maintain a voter registration equal to at least one-tenth of one percent of the total votes cast in the state or electoral district for all candidates for Governor at the most recent election at which a candidate for Governor was elected to a full term, and at least once in a four-year period a party candidate must poll at least one percent of the total votes cast in the electoral district for all candidates for President or any single state office