



February 4, 2026

Veterans for All Voters - Support for Oregon Bill HJR 201 Amended to Mirror the Voters Fairness Act

Oregon House Rules Committee

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jordan Baxter. I am a lifelong Oregonian, Navy Veteran, and volunteer lead with Veterans for All Voters, a nonpartisan, nonprofit community of over 5,000 Veterans and supporters across the political spectrum. Our mission is to advocate for election innovations that ensure fair representation and protect voting rights for all Americans, especially those who have served our country.

I am here today to express my strong support for Oregon Bill HJR 201 amended to mirror the Voters Fairness Act (IP-55), because all voters should be allowed to vote in taxpayer-funded primary elections that decide our state's most important representatives.

Oregon's Largest Voting Bloc Is Being Shut Out

Currently, over 1.1 million Oregon voters are not affiliated with political parties and cannot vote in taxpayer-funded primary elections that decide important statewide offices. Let me repeat that: 1.1 million Oregonians, taxpayers who fund these elections, are locked out of participating in them.

Nonaffiliated voters now outnumber both Democrats and Republicans in Oregon and are the fastest-growing voting group in the state. In fact, nonaffiliated voters are the largest voting bloc in 21 of Oregon's 36 counties and in 5 of our 6 U.S. House Districts.

Veterans, Young Voters, and Diverse Communities Are Disproportionately Disenfranchised

The demographic data reveals who is being left behind by our closed primary system:

As a Veteran, I'm particularly concerned that 59% of Veterans identify as independent or unaffiliated. These are Americans who served our country, who fought for democratic principles, and yet they're being shut out of the most consequential part of our democratic process.

More than half of young Oregon voters aged 18-34 are nonaffiliated. In 2020, 83% of Motor Voter registrations were nonaffiliated. Many young people who get their driver's license and are automatically registered to vote don't want to register with a party that doesn't align with their values just to exercise their right to vote. We're telling an entire generation that their independence is a barrier to participation.

The impact on diverse communities is equally troubling. Sixty-nine percent of Hispanic voters under 40 in Oregon are nonaffiliated. Asian American voters are twice as likely to identify as purely independent compared to the general population. Research shows that closed primaries have large demobilizing impacts on Asian American and Hispanic voters. Our current system is systematically excluding the voices of Oregon's increasingly diverse electorate.

Open Primaries Are Proven Reform

The evidence is clear: open primaries are the most impactful reform to increase voter turnout and reduce polarization. They boost participation in lower-turnout primaries and help ensure that a broader set of Oregonians decide who represents them in statewide offices.

When we open primaries, we expand the electorate from a narrow, often more extreme subset of partisans to include moderate, independent, and cross-party voters. This creates incentives for candidates to appeal to a broader range of constituents rather than just the most partisan voices. The result is less polarization and a more responsive, accountable government.

A Question of Democratic Principle

At its core, this issue comes down to a fundamental question: In a democracy, should all voters be able to vote to choose their representatives?

Oregon's taxpayers, all of them, fund our primary elections. Yet 1.1 million of them are told they cannot participate unless they pledge allegiance to a political party. That's not just unfair; it's fundamentally undemocratic.

As someone who served in the Navy, I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution. I didn't take that oath on behalf of a political party. I took it on behalf of all Americans and the democratic principles we hold dear. One of those principles is that every citizen should have an equal voice in choosing their leaders.

The Path Forward

I urge you to support HJR 201 amended to mirror the Voters Fairness Act (IP-55). Let all voters vote. Give Oregon's Veterans, young people, and diverse communities the representation they deserve. Strengthen our democracy by ensuring that the largest voting bloc in our state actually has a say in who represents them.

The question before you is simple: Do we want a system that works for political parties, or do we want a system that works for all Oregonians?

I believe the answer is clear. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jordan Baxter
Volunteer Lead
Veterans for All Voters