

February 23, 2016



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Oregon Progressive Party Position on Bill at 2016 Session of Oregon Legislature:

SB 1501:	Support -1 Amendment Oppose -2 Amendment (only the part applicable to the smaller minor parties)
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Dear Committee:

The Oregon Progressive Party supports the -1 amendment and opposes (as meaningless) the part of the -2 amendment that applies to the smaller minor parties under ORS 248.008(4)(b).

The -1 amendment would protect the smaller minor parties (Oregon Progressive Party and Constitution Party) from dissolution as a result of the 2015 Motor Voter Law (HB 2177) in the first instance in which their qualifications will be affected by the 2015 Motor Voter Law (the number of voters in the 2018 general election for Governor).

Note that this level of protection is less than is now proposed for the Working Families Party and Libertarian Parties under the -2 amendment, which would protect them from both the first and the second instances of the application of HB 2177 to their qualifications (the 2016 and 2018 election cycles).

The -2 amendment does not change existing law applicable to the smaller minor parties in any meaningful way. It is 100% irrelevant to the smaller minor parties.

The smaller minor parties (and the Pacific Green Party) maintain their status under ORS 248.008(4)(b), which requires a minor party to maintain membership of "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" plus win 1% in a statewide race at least once every 4 years.

HB 2177 (2015) sought to protect minor parties that use ORS 248.008(4)(b) for their continued existence by freezing the "the total number of registered electors in this state" to the number as of July 1, 2015. But that language was in error, because these minor parties do not base their status on that measurement. Instead of correcting this drafting error, SB 1501 deletes that protection for these 3 minor parties, placing in jeopardy the continued viability of the Oregon Progressive Party in particular.

The fact that HB 2177 (2015) was intended to protect the smaller minor parties is established by the language of the Staff Measure Summary, which specifically referred to the the "1/10 of 1 percent" test of ORS 248.008(4)(b).

There were 1,469,717 votes cast in the 2014 election for Governor. Thus, the current ORS 248.008(4)(b) requirement, applicable in August 2016 and August 2018, is that these minor parties have membership of at least 1470 members. The Oregon Progressive Party currently has 1878 members (408 to the good). But the added registrants from HB 2177 will increase this 1470 threshold, based upon turnout in the 2018 election for Governor. If Motor Voter adds 502,000 new registrants by November 2018, as has been predicted, and they turn out in that election at the 71% rate achieved in 2014, that will add 357 to that threshold and place the existence of the Oregon Progressive Party in jeopardy.

The Fiscal Impact Statement for HB 2177 stated an expectation of 438,000 additional registrants in the 2015-17 biennium, plus more over future years"over the remaining years of an eight-year phase-in period." The Secretary of State reports that the new system is registering about 10,000 new persons per month. I assume that 60% of those persons would have registered to vote anyway, so the HB 2177 system would be adding about 4,000 voter registrants per month in addition to the previous system. The time between the end of the 2015-17 biennium and the close of October 2018 is 16 months, so an additional 64,000 new voter registrants appear likely before the November 2018 general election. So my best estimate of the number of new registrants as a result of HB 2177 is 502,000.

Note that the data provided by the Secretary of State regarding experience "January 4th 2016 - February 2nd 2016" showed that, of 4348 new voter registrants, only 386 chose to join an actual political party (less than 9%). That contrasts with the fact that, under the previous system, 75% of all registrants chose to join an actual party.

The -1 amendment would protect the status of these smaller minor parties for the first instance in which their qualification will be affected by the 2015 Motor Voter Law. The -2 amendment would not. Instead, the -2 amendment would offer 2 election cycles of protection but only for the Working Families Party (and, technically, the Libertarian Party, which has more than sufficient membership to avoid jeopardy).

Please include this statement in the legislative record for this bill.

Thank you.

Oregon Progressive Party

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