



Oregon Association of County Clerks

OACC supportive of HB 2234 (with amendments)

The Oregon Association of County Clerks (OACC) is supportive of a centralized candidate filing system. So much so, in fact, that we recommend creating a work group to ensure the idea launches with a solid foundation.

Most elected officials are volunteers: There are nearly 1,000 Special Districts and 240 cities in Oregon. On average those entities have 5 elected officials. Most of those nearly 6,200 elected officials volunteer their time and are not professional politicians with experienced campaign teams. Making the filing process easier will be a significant relief to many.

Typed vs. handwritten: Elections officials often struggle trying to decipher hand-written filing documents. We strive to replicate information accurately but it can be very difficult. It is our preference to receive all filing documents typed. That creates a much better record and considerably increases accuracy. Also, with an online filing system, having content in required fields assists both the person filing and the filing officer limit errors and missing information.

However, we understand that not every candidate in every jurisdiction has access to the internet so we applaud the flexibility HB 2234 gives a candidate – increased efficiency for those that want it, yet the ability to use traditional methods if necessary. The flexibility, however, adds costs to the process.

Filing with a fee: Oregon County Clerks commend the confirmation that payment of fees will remain with local elections officials. When this new filing system launches, we recommend extra efforts be made to inform people filing that a filing is not complete and timely unless and until all required information, signatures, and fees are provided to the filing officer.

There is no mention in HB 2234 of including a payment component within the centralized candidate filing system. If that ever becomes part of the system, the local filing officer must retain control over those fees. We recommend a link be included in the system pointing the person filing to the applicable filing office to make a direct payment to that office.

Filing via petition: There is no mention in HB 2234 of how a person filing for office via petition could utilize the centralized candidate filing system to file and how that process would work. We recommend language in the bill that would grant the Secretary of State by rule the flexibility to add that mechanism to this new filing system.

Centralized system has great potential: Oregon County Clerks see great potential with the concept of a centralized candidate filing system. However, if is done poorly, it could create significant problems with wide-ranging unintended consequences. If done well, this system could:

- A. Direct the person filing to the appropriate filing officer
- B. Send completed forms electronically and immediately to the filing officer
- C. Show citizens and interested parties, in near real time, who has filed for an office
- D. Help Individuals looking to serve, by listing positions available
- E. Provide the person filing notice that they do or do not live within the appropriate boundary for a particular position based on GIS data – and provide a text box for them to explain why they do qualify for the office if their residence is outside of the area



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- F. Seamlessly interact with the statewide voter registration system, OCVR, so that:
 - a. The person filing could be notified they are not currently registered before they submit their filing
 - b. The person filing would pull into the filing document the exact name they used when registering to vote and provide them a chance to list what name to show on the ballot
 - c. County Elections Officials could quickly incorporate both electronically filed and traditionally filed documents

To be done well, a new centralized candidate filing system must be created with full input from the Oregon Secretary of State's office, from County Elections Officials, from City Elections officials, from Special Districts, candidates, and other concerned citizens. This system could be a significant improvement to voter information but if not adequately funded it could create more problems than it attempts to solve.

Section 2(3)(a) adds undo liability: The wording of Section 2(3)(a) too broadly creates a liability on the backs of filing officers. County Elections offices only have access to voter registration data, not employment data, not land ownership data, no criminal background data, nor other specialized data that may reveal a candidate's lack of qualification for an office.

Position on HB 2234: We urge you to fully fund a new centralized candidate filing system. It will take considerable work, but will help citizens, candidates and elections officials.