



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

March 11, 2019

To: [Senate Committee on Rules](#)  
Committee Chair: Senator Ginny Burdick

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Re: [SB 861](#) – Requires state to pay for ballot return envelopes – **Comments**

The League of Women Voters has consistently urged to remove barriers to voting, from Oregon's automatic voter registration to our vote by mail. This bill calls for pre-paid ballot envelopes. We would like to see improvement in our voter turnout and this would help. Washington State noted an [8% increase in voting when ballot postage was paid last year](#). They are discussing paying for ballot envelopes statewide too.

Some established League members are reluctant to support this, citing the \$2.7 million cost, already allocated in the [Governor's budget](#), page 301. League members are generally comfortable using stamps and paying the current \$0.55 cost for each.

We appreciate that this bill could improve voter turnout for these populations:

- Young voters. Many are unfamiliar with postage stamps and do not usually use them.
- Low-income voters. The cost of the current \$0.55 stamp, or more for heavier ballots, may deter voting for them and other members of their households, weighing budget impact.
- Rural voters. Many ballots are deposited in dropboxes, which may not be nearby and can be less accessible, compared to many urban areas.

We urge careful consideration of these factors.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Rebecca L. Gladstone in black ink.

Rebecca Gladstone  
LWVOR Governance Coordinator