



To: House Rules Committee

From: Sydney Scout, State Director, Oregon Working Families Party

Re: Support for HB3310

Monday, April 15th, 2019

Dear Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Working Families Party. Founded in Oregon in 2006, the Oregon Working Families Party (OWFP) is a political party that fights for an economy that works for all of us and a democracy in which every voice matters. In Oregon, we represent 9,899 registered voters, and our affiliates represent tens of thousands more working people across the state.

The Oregon Working Families Party strongly supports the passage of House Bill 3310 - the Oregon Voting Rights Act.

The Oregon Voting Rights Act (OVRA) would make it so that voting systems implemented by Oregon's school districts, education service districts, and community colleges align with the National Voting Rights Act (NVRA). By creating a community-driven process that empowers local governments and communities, the OVRA would make Oregon's local elections processes and outcomes more equitable.

The need for the OVRA is an immediately present in the work of the OWFP. For the 2019 Special Election, we have endorsed 37 candidates running for local office - an overwhelming majority of which are school board candidates. Most of our endorsed candidates are women, people of color, and/or young people, and, as such, face significant systemic barriers to holding elected office.

These barriers are exacerbated in districts where school board directors are voted on using an at-large, rather than zoned, system.

On the Salem-Keizer School Board, although 40% of students in the district are Latinx, they have never had a Latinx school board director, and they've only ever had one person of color elected to their Board. This cycle, we're thrilled to be supporting two Latinx leaders running for Salem-Keizer School Board. In order to win these seats, they each have to receive nearly 20,000 votes from the entire District.

This is one of the largest amounts of votes required to win any school board seat in a campaign we've endorsed this election. The only campaigns who need more votes to win are running for Portland Public School Board positions, which is a district that has 10,000 more students than Salem-Keizer's 40,000 student population. And even with PPS' increased number of votes required, the Director positions are elected by zone, which could attribute to why they have a much more diverse history of school board directors.

When communities are reflected in elected leadership positions, we know that their specific needs are much more likely to be heard and met. The OVRA is a simple solution that could break down barriers to having reflective, representative leadership in local education boards. As a Party that fights for a democracy in which every voice matters, we can't overstate our support for the OVRA. We urge you to pass HB 3310 this session.

Sincerely,

Sydney Scout  
State Director  
Oregon Working Families Party