



May 20th, 2019

Chair Burdick & members of the committee,

My name is Sal Peralta. I am testifying today on behalf of the Independent Party of Oregon to ask you to oppose SB 761-3.

You may recall that I testified against the underlying bill when it came before your committee in March. That bill sought to restrict the rights of voters to sign single-signature sheets that they, themselves, did not print.

This -3 amendment takes the original legislation and makes it a bit more cynical. It declares an emergency that suspends the right of anyone to use e-signature sheets for four years.

It is hard for me to see this as anything other than a highly cynical political maneuver intended to make it harder for initiative petitions to qualify for the ballot and an entirely political attack on the basic speech and association rights of organizations and individuals.

I realize there are some groups that just want to make the initiative process harder to use, and so they are bringing forward this legislation for strategic political reasons.

From a policy standpoint, this is not something that should blow with the winds of convenience. It should not be the policy of this body to allow groups to open up provisions of the law for themselves, only to close them to others. That is literally what some of the groups behind this are asking you to do today.

Instead of applying that political frame, I would instead ask you to consider it from the standpoint of basic fairness. The main questions you should be asking are: does the

use of these single signature sheets make the system more accountable and easier to use?

In both cases, the answer is “yes”, and the data is clear.

This current law makes the initiative process easier to use by greatly simplifying it for the person signing the petition. We know from the testimony in March that the validity rate of these single signature petitions is 99% or higher. If the goal is to actually reduce fraud, we should be trying to increase the use of these sheets, not decrease it.

Distributing single-signature petition sheets greatly reduces confusion and signature errors that many volunteers experience with the 5 and 10 signature sheets. It allows those who want to sign a petition, but not ask others to make a similar commitment, to more easily participate.

This legislation does not reduce the risk of fraud. We already know that the validity rate for these single signature petitions is 99% or better. What work was needed to address fraud has already been accomplished by previous legislatures. You have gotten rid of pay-by-signature and changed the law so that under the current system, the civil and criminal liability for any fraud that occurs, whether it involves single-signature sheets or multiple sheets, already attaches to the chief petitioners. This bill accomplishes no meaningful improvements to that system. There is, instead, only downside: Less convenience for individuals who want to sign petitions; greater risk for those circulating them.

We urge your committee to reject this proposal.

Respectfully,

Sal Peralta