



February 19, 2020

Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Baertschiger, and Members of the Committee.

For the record my name is Thomas Mosher and I am the Interim Director of the Oregon Working Families Party. For over a decade the Oregon Working Families Party has been a proud and active minor political party, allowing Oregonians across our state to signify their values and come together to endorse and nominate candidates under the OWFP banner.

I'm here today to offer our support for House Bill 4026A which in many ways is an extension and further fix for what was attempted last year as part of Senate Bill 244.

Under current law, every two years we are given two ways to maintain our minor party status. The first option is to have .5% of all registered voters be members of our party. This is a metric we have been proud to meet in the past. However, because Motor Voter automatically registers voters without allowing them to register with a party at the time of their registration, it has unintentionally raised this bar by a fair margin. This has also been affected by adjustments to how inactive voter status is determined. Both of these factors combine to continuously increase the overall denominator (total registered voters) without accounting for which voters are actually active, or of the margin between total registered voters and the number of registered voters who have voted in any recent election.

The second option to maintain our status is to run a statewide candidate of our own and receive a percentage of votes not compared to total registered voters, but rather to voters who voted in the previous Gubernatorial election. At the Oregon Working Families Party, we want to be able to choose whether and when we run stand-alone statewide candidates based on our core policy mission, not just as a means to maintain our status.

Unfortunately after final amendments were adopted, last years Senate Bill 244 did not adequately solve the situation. That is why we are here today to ask that you pass House Bill 4026A which would adjust the threshold for maintaining minor party status to account for the increased influx of automatically registered voters through motor voter.

House Bill 4026A would reduce the percentage needed to maintain minor party status from $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% to $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%. As we have noted we have seen a large influx of newly registered voters through automatic voter registration since 2016, and we expect this trend to continue as we

move to implement REAL ID standards and as we continue to be one of the most migrated to states in the county. While we are supportive of the efforts of automatic motor voter registration we believe it is important to avoid the unintended consequences to minor parties. As anyone who updates their vehicle and license registration is automatically registered through motor voter, and because they do not have an opportunity to register with a party at that time, we believe that we will continue to see the number of unaffiliated voters increase in the coming years.

The Oregon Working Families Party would rather spend our time and efforts in 2020 reaching out to these newly registered voters in efforts to get them to affiliate, and working with cross nominated candidates we support than having to seek out a candidate to run for statewide office purely to maintain our status as a minor party. By reducing the threshold needed to maintain minor party status to be reflective of the influx of newly registered voters that have come on the roles and are likely to continue to come on because of automatic motor voter registration it gives us that opportunity.

That is why we ask that you pass House Bill 4026A.

Thank you for your time,

Thomas Mosher
Interim Director, Oregon Working Families Party