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COMMENTS REGARDING SENATE BILL 785

Moving the Primary in Presidential Election Years

Dear Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Girod, and Senators Burdick, Manning, and Thatcher,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some brief comments about Senate Bill 755. The Oregon Association of County Clerks (OACC) would like the Committee to be aware of some issues with SB 785 as written.

SB 755 would move the Presidential Primary election from the third Tuesday in May to the first Tuesday in March. It is the Clerk's understanding, after having met with the author of this bill, that the original intent was to only move the Presidential Primary election and not move the Gubernatorial Primary or the Special District election in May of odd years.

This bill would need some significant amendments to make it workable for voters, candidates, and legislators. Specifically, it appears that in Sections 2 and 3 of the bill, as currently written, there could be unintended consequences resulting in both March and May elections for placing district director and measure elections on the ballot, rather than keeping the election on the current date. Consistency of election dates is needed for candidates, election offices, and elections to be successful. NOTE: The legislature changed the date of the Special District director elections in 2001 from March to May.

Based on the current language of the bill, statutory deadlines for filing would land just after the Christmas holiday on December 26. In order to be workable for voters, candidates, and elections offices, current statutory deadlines for candidate, measure and voters' pamphlet filings would need to be moved back into mid-December. A full review of the impact of moving election deadlines is suggested.

Additionally, the current wording would have the primary and associated filing deadlines jumping back and forth between March and May every other year. This lack of consistency would be challenging for all parties.

OACC is willing to participate in further conversations about this concept, if the committee is interested in moving forward with this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and comments.