



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-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.

April 8, 2021

To: [Senator Rob Wagner](#), Chair
[Senate Committee On Rules](#)

Re: [SB 785](#) – Oregon Presidential primary election dates – **Comments**

SB 785 would change Oregon Presidential primary dates to give Oregon’s votes consequence. Oregon’s current third May Tuesday date would go to “Super Tuesday”, the first Tuesday in March. The bill also adjusts dates for the short legislative session in Presidential election years.

The LWVUS has supported national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections to **ensure equality for voters from all states** and to facilitate the electoral process. The LWVUS Position on Selection of the President says, “...The League supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system—from the candidate selection process to the general election....” The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes elections should be conducted to encourage voter participation and supports evaluating the timing of the Oregon Primary.

There are clear benefits:

- ✓ The League works hard to inform voters. Presidential candidates might come to Oregon to campaign when our votes matter, a plus for voter engagement.
- ✓ Oregon Super Tuesday ballot mailing dates would move our election to second, behind New Hampshire, from our current position of 46th.
- ✓ The candidate field is larger in March, but winnowed before Oregon votes now.

And there are concerns:

- ❖ The presidential primary should not be a dedicated, single issue election. The League advocates for efficiency and the economy of ensuring that state and local races and measures be presented in a unified primary election calendar.
We note the Clerks’ comment that Special District elections were moved to May in 2001. The same year, LWVOR opposed moving initiatives to voting in May (it did not pass).
- ❖ The benefits may justify the needed outreach to address voter and candidate filing confusion. One of four, every other year? Shorten candidate filing periods?
- ❖ The bill as written moves legislative opening dates from February 1 to May 1 in even-numbered presidential election years. Our 2020 short session opened February 3 and ran to March 7, during which Legislators could not campaign. The proposal may accommodate practical pre-session scheduling needs for legislators.

We welcome discussion and amendments to reconsider our position. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President

Norman Turrill
LWVOR Governance Coordinator