



Date: June 8th, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Rules

Re: OEA support for HB 3291A

Chair Wagner and members of the committee:

The Oregon Education Association represents 41,000 education professionals across the state of Oregon. From early learning to community college, from teachers and instructors to education service professionals, OEA's members span the entire spectrum of education.

We believe that civic participation is critical to a functioning and flourishing democracy. And that participation should be simple, encouraged, and as accessible as possible. HB 3291A helps improve our current system on all these fronts.

Oregon has a rich history of improving access to the ballot for folks from all walks of life. Pioneering mail-in ballots ensured people could vote on their own time, in their own space, and boosted participation by making voting simpler and accessible. Automatic voter registration further simplified the process by registering hundreds of thousands more Oregonians, encouraging even more people to participate. Pre-paid postage removed yet another barrier to participation this last year. But no system is perfect, and Oregon can still do a lot to improve participation in its elections.

Allowing votes to be counted as long as they are postmarked by election day would finally deliver on Oregon's promise to be a true vote by mail state. The arbitrary cutoff to mail your ballot that is published every election makes our current system more burdensome. Right as the bulk of people make their final decisions and vote (last few days leading up to an election), they find that the simplicity that has been promised them is not available. This serves only to drive down participation, the exact opposite of what we should be encouraging folks to do.

For Oregon to continue to improve civic engagement by making the system simple and accessible, please pass HB 3291A with a do pass recommendation.

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