



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Testimony in Support of HB 2687**

February 11, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, Representative for House District 46. I am honored to testify in support of HB 2687, a bill to expand access to the vote through “postmarked by” ballots.

In 2019, the legislature made an important investment in our elections by providing paid postage for ballots. This landmark policy turned every single mailbox into a drop box: making it easier for rural Oregonians, Oregonians with disabilities and limited mobility, and Oregonians who rely on ballot assistance to complete their vote in the safety of their home.

But without postmarked ballots, the guarantee of that option that so greatly lowers barriers to voting disappears the last 3-4 days of the election, when the post office cannot guarantee the ballot will arrive at the County Elections Office by 8:00 pm election day. A voter cannot control when their ballot is received by the elections office once they place it in the mail. A system that works for 17 days of the election needs to be able to work for the last 4 days as well, during a period where many voters cast their ballots.

This guessing game about whether your ballot will be accepted needs to stop. We can also further prevent future disruptions like health safety protocols or drop in post office service levels to inhibit the vote. This bill is well worth it to continue Oregon’s leadership on safe, secure, efficient elections where every single vote matters regardless of age or distance from a ballot box. In some counties, rural voters live two hours from the County Elections Office, presenting a hardship to the vote that may deter voting entirely. Changing the postmark deadline to election day will mitigate risks that someone who cast their vote won’t see their voice counted in the returns. This is a gap that needs to be addressed and we have the opportunity with this bill.

At a time when over [35 other states](#) are exploiting the misinformation about election fraud to introduce 400+ bills attacking the right to vote, Oregon can lead by expanding access to the vote and restoring confidence in our election system. Already 23 other states accept ballots after election day so long as they were postmarked by the election deadline.

**We need to do everything we can to ensure that when an Oregonian casts their vote in the mail before the election deadline, they know their vote will count and their voice will be heard.**

I urge you to support HB 2687. Thank you.