
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

February 11, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon has made access to democracy a top priority. Reproductive freedom and health care are often attacked at the ballot box and unfairly politicized, so we advocate for policies that ensure everyone can vote to defend their bodily autonomy and access to healthcare. We respectfully request the committee's support of House Bill 2687. Civic participation is the bedrock of any democracy. To facilitate full and robust voter engagement in our elections, we need to decrease barriers and expand access to safe and secure voting. From automatic voter registration to mail-in ballots, Oregon has long been a vanguard and national leader in improving access to the ballot. By updating the deadline for ballot receipt and changing the postmark date for ballots to be Election Day, House Bill 2687 improves upon our current system and makes participating in elections simple and accessible, even with disruptions like mail delays, limited drop box locations, and health safety protocols.

In 2019, the legislature made an important investment in our elections by providing paid postage for ballots. This landmark policy turns 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. This bipartisan success has support from the current and former Secretary of States, 42 legislative sponsors, the Governor, and a broad coalition of community-based organizations.

Oregon can finally become a true vote-by-mail state by joining 23 other states in allowing votes to be counted so long as ballots are postmarked by election day. Currently, voters must time when they mail in their ballots to ensure there are enough transit days for it to get to the County Elections Office by 8:00 pm on Election Day. Even with cautious timing, voters still have no control over when their ballot is received to be counted once they place it in the mail. This current system is cumbersome and confusing. Many voters fill out their ballots in the last few days leading up to an election only to find that the lauded convenience of mail-in voting is no longer an option for them. This can and does inhibit voting. 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.

In some counties, rural voters live two hours from the County Elections Office. Changing the postmark deadline to election day will mitigate the risks that someone who casts their vote won't see their voice counted in the returns. The cost would be minimal, and well worth it to continue Oregon's leadership on safe, secure, efficient elections where every single vote matters regardless of age, disability, or distance from a ballot box.

In a time when misinformation about election fraud abounds and the votes of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have been actively suppressed in other states, Oregon can lead by expanding access to the vote and restoring confidence in our election system. By passing House Bill 2687, we can ensure Oregonians who cast their vote and place it in the mail before the election deadline know their vote will be counted and their voices will be heard.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges your support of House Bill 2687.

Sincerely,
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Interim Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon