

Submitter: Diana Williams
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HJR20

I fully support HJR 20. I would also like to address Russell Johnson's testimony, as there is so much inaccuracy in it.

I'm sorry, but I have to push back on almost everything he said. His comments are not based on facts and do not reflect the reality of our education system or elections. First, high school students in Oregon do receive education on the Constitution of our state and the nation, as it is a requirement for graduation. In fact, students start civics lessons and how government works starting in 5th grade. This continues to 12th grade. Students also have to take Social Studies and Government classes. Some schools even offer AP PoliSci. Starting at just 5th grade, they learn about the structure of our government, the Bill of Rights, and the responsibilities of citizenship. He would not know this because he hasn't been in the school system for 42 years. As for his concerns about taxation and economics, those topics are covered in various social studies and math classes. His claims about testing standards and equity are also unfounded. While Oregon has moved away from standardized testing, that doesn't mean students are not being assessed. Teachers use a variety of methods to evaluate student learning, and the state has implemented other measures to ensure that all students are receiving a quality education. Regarding his concerns about our elections, there is simply no evidence to support his claims. Vote-by-mail has been used successfully in Oregon for decades, and our tally machines are subject to rigorous testing and auditing. These measures ensure that our elections are secure and accurate. Finally, I find it deeply concerning that he would suggest that young adults should not have a say in our democracy. The fact is that 16 and 17-year-olds are impacted by the decisions made by our government, and they should have a voice in the process. Russell is actually a great example of why young adults should be allowed to vote. We should be encouraging more young people, not shutting them out of our democracy. His comment "Remember back when you are 16-17" is absolutely fucking stupid. 16 and 17-year-olds, historically, were not as politically engaged as they are now. Russell's generation was beating African-American men and women in restaurants and throwing a fit about integrated schools. I know this because I have had the unfortunate opportunity of meeting him. His comment that 16 and 17-year-olds lack the maturity and life experience to vote is both dismissive and incorrect. Studies have shown that young people who are able to vote are more likely to stay engaged in civic life, and their participation helps to shape policies that directly affect their lives. The notion that maturity and life experience only come with age is simply not true. There are plenty of adults who lack the maturity and experience to make informed decisions, like Russell, just as there are plenty of young people who are capable of doing so. By denying 16 and 17-year-olds the right to

vote, we are sending the message that their voices do not matter and that they are not valued members of our community. We should be working to empower all citizens, regardless of age, to participate in our democracy and help shape the future of our state.

Pass HJR 20.