

SB 952 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 5/19, 5/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure requires the Governor to temporarily fill vacancies for U.S. Senator by appointment within 30 days of when a vacancy in office occurs, in addition to the current requirement that a vacancy be filled by special election. It requires the appointee to be a citizen qualified to hold office and be affiliated with the same political party as the Senator who vacated the office, for at least 180 days before the vacancy occurred. It expires the appointment when the term of office ends, or a successor to the office is elected by special election, whichever comes first. It requires the special election for U.S. Senator to occur at least 80 days, and not more than 150 days, after the vacancy occurs, regardless of whether that vacancy occurred either before the 61st day, or after the 62nd day before the general election, if the term of the office is not to be filled at that election. It also prohibits a Governor from appointing themselves to fill the vacancy.

FISCAL: No fiscal impact

REVENUE: No revenue impact

Senate Vote: Ayes, 16; Nays, 13

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Under Article I, Section 2 of the United States (U.S.) Constitution, vacancies in the U.S. House of Representatives must be filled by elections. The 17th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution provides that Senate vacancies may be filled by temporary appointment if a legislature gives the governor such authority.

Oregon currently fills vacancies in the office of U.S. Representative and Senator by special election (ORS 188.120). Prior to 1986, Section 16, Article V of the Oregon Constitution required the Governor to fill a vacancy in the office of U.S. Senator by appointment until a successor could be elected at the next general election. The 1985 Legislative Assembly referred House Joint Resolution 30 (Measure 4) and passed House Bill 2603 to provide that a vacancy in the office of U.S. Senator would be filled at a special election called by the Governor in the same manner as vacancies for U.S. Representative. Measure 4 was approved with 56 percent of the vote in May 1986.

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), 37 states authorize the governor to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy by appointment, and the appointee serves until the next regularly scheduled general election. Of these states, nine require the appointee to be from the same political party as the Senator who vacated the office.

Of the 13 states that require a special election to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy, nine allow the governor to make a temporary appointment, in certain circumstances. Oregon, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin do not allow temporary appointments before the special election is held.