HB 3474   STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

Prepared By:	Leslie Porter, LPRO Analyst
Meeting Dates:	6/12

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure requires the Secretary of State to study changes to the United States Postal Service, including an analysis of how any changes may impact Oregon's vote-by-mail system, and report to the Legislative Assembly by September 15, 2026. The measure sunsets on January 2, 2027.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Vote-by-mail, an election method where voters receive and return their ballots through the mail, was first approved on a limited basis in 1981, when the Legislative Assembly authorized counties to conduct certain elections by mail. Vote-by-mail was made permanent for some elections in 1987, and its use was expanded in 1993 to allow it for statewide elections other than a primary or general election. In 1998, Oregon voters approved an initiative (Ballot Measure 60) requiring vote-by-mail in all biennial primary and general elections, making Oregon the first state to go to a completely vote-by-mail system.

Recent legislative changes to Oregon's vote-by-mail system include requiring the state to pay postage on ballot return envelopes (2019) and allowing ballots mailed on Election Day to count even if they are received up to seven days after Election Day (2021).

For state elections, county elections officials mail ballot packets to all active registered voters between 20 and 14 days before an election. For federal elections, counties send ballot packets to military and overseas voters no later than 45 days before the election. The ballot packet includes the ballot, a secrecy envelope (where used), and a pre-addressed, postage-paid, return envelope. The voter marks the ballot, inserts it in the secrecy envelope (where used), and places the ballot and secrecy envelope into the return envelope. The voter signs the return envelope and then either mails it or takes it to a drop box at a site designated by the county clerk's office.