

**Date:** March 9, 2025  
**To:** House Committee On Rules  
**From:** William Vollmer, citizen  
**Re:** Testimony In Opposition to HJR 3

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HJR 3. This bill would refer to voters an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to require that the current signature requirements for voter initiatives be met separately in each of Oregon's 36 counties. Such a provision would effectively grant sparsely populated counties (e.g., Wheeler County (with 1,038 registered voters), Gilliam County (with 1,445 registered voters), and Sherman County (with 1,514 registered voters)) veto power over all statewide voter-initiated ballot measures by simply not signing enough petitions in any of those counties.

HJR 3 would also greatly increase the cost of obtaining the required signatures. Oregon's lesser populated counties do not have mass gatherings where volunteers can efficiently gather signatures. It would basically require signature gatherers to go door-to-door in those counties.

It is already hard enough to qualify statewide voter-initiated measures for the ballot. The number of statewide initiatives has greatly declined since 2000 owing largely (a) to the fact that the Oregon Legislature and Secretary of State keep adding new (and often arbitrary) requirements to the signature gathering rules and (b) to the long delays involved in obtaining official ballot titles from Oregon Supreme Court review.

Simply put, the Legislature doesn't like the initiative process. Why? Presumably because the initiative process takes away some of the power of the Legislature and, perhaps more importantly, it provides a counter to the outsized influence that big money donors currently have in Oregon politics. Big money donors, and the member of both parties who are beholden to those donors, are quite happy with the status quo. That is why the Legislature has been so resistant to passing meaningful campaign finance reform. Indeed, the passage of HB4024 last year only happened because the Legislature feared that Initiative Petition 9 would make it to the ballot and bring with it even stricter reforms.

Alas, the only conceivable rationale behind HJR 3 is to kill the voter-initiated initiative process. If the Legislature really felt such a measure was needed, then they should also prohibit the passage of any legislation that isn't supported by at least one member of each of Oregon's congressional districts! Oregon needs its initiative process to give the voters in this State an ability to decide for themselves what legislation they wish to see on the books and counters some of the huge influence that big money donors currently have over politicians in this state.

Respectfully submitted,

William Vollmer (NE Portland)