



CONSOLIDATED OREGON INDIVISIBLE NETWORK

To: House Committee on Rules
From: Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN)
Re: IN OPPOSITION TO HJR 11
Date: March 9, 2025

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chair Drazen, Vice-Chair Pham, and Members of the House Committee on Rules:

The Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN), representing thousands of Oregonians in more than 50 Indivisible groups from all corners of the state, **strongly opposes HJR 11**. The Indivisible Project began as an effort to help ordinary citizens engage in the democratic process and defend threats to democracy. We believe this bill is a threat to democracy, making it more difficult than it already is for citizens to bring about desired change.

The initiative process is one of the primary tools for citizens to make or change laws. HJR11 would change the **current requirement based on a percentage of total statewide votes cast** for all candidates for Governor in the preceding gubernatorial election to a **new requirement based on a total votes cast, but divided equally among the congressional districts of this state**, for all candidates for Governor in the preceding gubernatorial election. **As if that's not bad enough, HJR11 also increases the percentages for required signatures by a very significant 2%.**

These two drastic changes would dramatically impact not only the feasibility of signature-gathering, but also the fairness of the process.

First, regarding feasibility: It should be obvious that gathering the required percentage of signatures in rural districts, such as CD2, would be so much harder than in more populated districts, such as CD3. Signature-gathering for initiative petitions is already an extremely difficult and expensive task, as evidenced by how few of those filed actually qualify for the ballot. By increasing the percentage of signatures required and demanding that they be collected equally from all congressional districts, HJR11 would make the citizens' initiative process nearly impossible, both from a practical and a financial standpoint. It seems to us that the sponsors of this bill seek to simply eliminate a primary tool of citizens to influence state law. **Only very wealthy special interests could ever afford to qualify initiatives with these requirements. And that is clearly the point.**

Second, regarding fairness: We believe that HJR11 would grant citizens in one district veto power against an initiative that might be very popular in all the other districts, upending the democratic principle of one-person-one-vote. Imagine if citizens in Eastern and Southern Oregon's CD2, for some reason, strongly opposed a particular initiative. They could, effectively, keep an otherwise very popular initiative off the ballot for everyone else in the state. Likewise, if citizens of the Portland metro area CD3 strongly objected to an initiative that might benefit all other districts of Oregon, the urban-dwellers could likewise veto the initiative. It doesn't take too much imagination to think about recent successful ballot measures, brought to voters by the initiative process, that could have easily been thwarted by one district representing just one-sixth of the electorate. **We wonder if the sponsors of this bill would be willing to give just one-sixth of their constituents the power to nullify their most recent campaign victory.**

As legislators, you surely know that the Oregon Supreme Court has recognized two "co-equal" law-making bodies in our state: The Legislature and The People. Surely you must also know that any effort to make it harder for The People to make or change laws is inherently anti-democratic. **At a time when democracy is facing so many threats at the national level, we must do everything we can to defend it here in Oregon.**

Please DO NOT PASS HJR 11.

Respectfully,

Deborah Ferrer, The Dalles

on behalf of the Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN)

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