



119 SE 52nd Ave, Portland OR 97215

Date: Feb. 10, 2025

To: Chair Rep. Bowman; Vice Chairs Rep Brazan, Rep. Hai Pham, and Members of the House Committee on Rules

Re: HJR3 and HJR11 affecting the Oregon initiative process

The mission of the Alliance for Democracy is to establish true democracy, end corporate domination, and create a just society based on an equitable, sustainable economy. Here in Oregon we have supported the use of the Initiative process to change or enact state laws, which the Oregon legislature either did not or would not enact or change themselves. The initiative process is recognized as one of two methods of law making – the other being the legislature itself. These proposed laws would make the use of the initiative process ineffective.

But Oregonians didn't always have the initiative process available to them. In 1902, the citizens of Oregon were able to vote on a legislatively referred ballot measure after much advocacy in the state legislature by proponents. This measure enabled Oregon citizens to directly initiate amendments to the Oregon state constitution, as well as enact new state statutes. This was the first time the Oregon Constitution had been amended since 1859 and it was done by the voters of Oregon.

What changes in law has the initiative process allowed in Oregon?

- Oregon is only one of two states which gave women the right to vote via the initiative process. The measure passed by a margin of 61,265 in favor to 57,104 against in 1912.
- A labor union backed 1912 initiative established an eight-hour day for workers on public works projects.
- In 1930, voters using the initiative process approved a plan for the creation of public utility districts.
- In 1938, voters approved an initiative to clean up the polluted Willamette river. The river was polluted by the pulp and paper mills and sewage. The OR legislature had already approved this law but the governor vetoed it. It was enacted by wide voter margin.
- More recently, we have seen voters approve an initiative measure requiring that a permanent nuclear waste disposal facility within the state must be federally licensed and have voter approval before nuclear facilities can be built in the state of Oregon. (1980, Yes - 608,412; No -535,049)
- In 1984, voters created the Citizens Utility Board to represent the interests of water and power user (Yes, 637,968; No, 556,826)
- In 1994, voters approved of physician assisted suicide.
- In 1998. voters approved mail in ballots in primary and general elections
- In 2014, voters approved legalized recreational marijuana use in Oregon.

- And the initiative process has been used at the city and county level to enact limits on campaign contributions to end, or at least attempt to end, the influence of large concentrations of money in our elections.

For a full lists of all initiatives which Oregon voters have made decisions on, view <https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/Documents/elections/initiative.pdf>

So, it is very disappointing to see that efforts are being made in Oregon to curtail the use of the initiative process. HJR3 would make our constitutional right to place initiatives on the ballot much more difficult by requiring that the same percentage of valid signatures currently required statewide be required in each county. HJR11 would increase the number of valid voter signatures needed to qualify an initiative to appear on the ballot. S

Since most initiatives get on the ballot due to the efforts of paid signature gathers, the expense of fulfilling the requirements of both of HJR3 and HJR11 would increase many fold, making it impossible for all except the most wealthy to qualify measures for the ballot. The League of Women Voters estimates that the cost would increase 5 fold. The initiative process would be lost to ordinary people, destroying the citizen sponsored initiative process.

Voters need to have the power to decide for themselves, especially when the legislature fails to act in the first place. These two bills have only one purpose: kill the initiative process use in the state of Oregon.

The Alliance for Democracy advocates for a no vote on HJR11 and HJR3.