

Submitter: Stacey Holeman  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HJR11

The two drastic changes proposed by this bill would dramatically impact both the feasibility of signature-gathering and the fairness of the process.

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.

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 "coequal" 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.

I STRONGLY OPPOSE HJR11.