

Submitter: Patrick Dow
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

As a Republican voter in Oregon, I've watched our state's political landscape shift dramatically since the implementation of vote-by-mail in 1998. For over 28 years, not a single Republican has been elected to statewide office, a stark contrast to the era of Republican governors when Oregon thrived in beauty and cleanliness. Back then, Portland's streets were safe to walk, and the state exuded a sense of order and pride. I believe this decline isn't a coincidence—vote-by-mail has fundamentally altered the integrity and accountability of our elections, and it's time to abolish it in favor of same-day, in-person voting with watermarked paper ballots, counted on the spot after voters show ID proving citizenship.

First, vote-by-mail has eroded trust in our electoral process. When ballots are mailed out weeks in advance, they're vulnerable to loss, theft, or coercion—issues that simply don't exist with in-person voting. I remember when elections felt immediate and secure, with citizens gathering at polling stations to cast their votes together. Now, the prolonged process of mailing and collecting ballots drags on, leaving room for doubt and irregularities. Requiring voters to show up on Election Day with ID ensures that only eligible citizens participate, and watermarked paper ballots counted that same day would restore confidence by making the process transparent and tamper-proof.

Second, the shift to vote-by-mail has coincided with Oregon's decline from its peak under Republican leadership. When we had in-person voting, governors like Tom McCall and Victor Atiyeh kept our state pristine—our forests were maintained, our cities were clean, and Portland was a jewel of the Northwest. Today, trash litters the streets, and crime has made parts of Portland unrecognizable. I can't help but see a connection: vote-by-mail seems to have handed power to a system that prioritizes convenience over accountability, sidelining the practical governance Republicans once brought. Same-day voting would bring back that direct civic engagement, ensuring our elections reflect the will of active, invested citizens.

Third, the lack of Republican victories since vote-by-mail began suggests a structural bias. For nearly three decades, one party has dominated, which defies the diversity of thought Oregonians once expressed at the polls. In-person voting with ID verification would level the playing field, requiring voters to prove their citizenship and preventing any potential exploitation of mailed ballots. Watermarked ballots, counted immediately, would eliminate delays and manipulation risks, giving every voter—Republican or otherwise—a fair shot at being heard. It's not about suppressing votes; it's about ensuring they're legitimate and reflective of our state's true values.

Finally, abolishing vote-by-mail would reconnect Oregonians to the democratic process. There's something powerful about showing up in person, presenting your ID, and casting a vote you know will be counted that day. It's a ritual that reinforces community and responsibility—qualities I saw in Oregon's cleaner, safer past. The current system feels detached, with ballots mailed out like junk mail and tallied over weeks. I want my state back—the one where elections were a shared event, not a drawn-out experiment. Same-day voting with secure, watermarked ballots is the way to reclaim that legacy.