

Submitter:

Diane Elliott

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB210

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I write to you today in strong opposition to the proposed legislation to repeal vote-by-mail provisions. Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy, and any action that limits access to the ballot undermines our shared commitment to ensuring every eligible voter has the opportunity to participate in elections, regardless of their circumstances.

Vote-by-mail has proven to be a critical and secure method of voting for millions of Americans, especially during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Repealing this provision would disproportionately impact vulnerable communities—those with disabilities, the elderly, rural residents, and working-class citizens—who rely on this option to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

Vote-by-mail is not just a convenience, it is a lifeline. Repealing it would strip away an essential mechanism that allows all eligible voters, including those who are homebound or live in remote areas, to engage in the electoral process. For many, especially those with health issues or caregiving responsibilities, voting by mail is the only viable way to ensure their voices are heard.

Studies have shown that vote-by-mail has a positive impact on voter turnout. By making voting more accessible, we empower a greater number of citizens to exercise their rights. Repealing this option would disproportionately disenfranchise those who face barriers to in-person voting, including long wait times and transportation issues.

If we look at the history of voting by mail in Oregon we see that the turnout for elections is higher than before vote by mail was made permanent. If we take May 1998 primary election as an example, 41% of Oregon voters are permanent absentee voters. Overall, the state had a record low 35% turnout. In that election absentee turnout was 53% vs 22% at the polls. Voting by mail has worked in Oregon for many years. November 2006 general election turnout was 70%. Voting by mail has been proven to work in Oregon.

There is no evidence to suggest that vote-by-mail increases voter fraud. Numerous studies and audits have repeatedly shown that mail-in voting is secure and that the rate of fraud is negligible. Instead of focusing on repealing a system that has been widely successful and trusted, we should continue to work on improving it through better education and enhanced safeguards.

Democracy thrives when participation is broad and inclusive. The right to vote is a fundamental principle of American democracy, and any action to restrict access to voting, whether in-person or by mail, risks eroding trust in our electoral system. We should be expanding access to voting, not limiting it.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the broader implications of repealing vote-by-mail provisions. Rather than rolling back progress, we should be focusing on ways to strengthen and secure our electoral system to ensure that every voice is heard. Repealing vote-by-mail would undermine the very principles of democracy we hold dear. I ask that you reject this legislation in favor of protecting the rights of all voters.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter.

Sincerely,
Diane Elliott
Albany, OR