

Submitter:

Thomas Strahota

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB210

I strongly OPPOSE SB 210 which would eliminate Oregon's vote by mail elections and instead require the majority of voters to appear in person at polling places on election day.

Mail-in ballots are efficient and cost-saving: This would be a cumbersome and expensive proposition that would discourage voter participation. As it stands Oregon's vote by mail system is easy to use and enables everyone to vote from their home at a time that is convenient for them. An in person voting requirement that takes place only on election day is physically demanding, difficult for working people to make it to the polls and voters may be discouraged from voting due to bad weather. Additionally the costs and staffing of polling places in each precinct would be prohibitive under this bill. It requires potentially seven paid staffers at each polling place of different political parties for a minimum of 12 hours. It's almost impossible to find that many available people willing to work at a polling place for just one day. Not to mention the difficulty of locating polling places. Schools are no longer used as polling locations due to the risk to students of that many strangers on their school grounds. Also additional expense will be required to purchase multiple physical polling booths for each precinct which will only be used rarely and will need to be transported and stored. Oregon currently has a very cost effective and convenient way for the most voters to participate in the electoral process by voting by mail.

Secure and promotes engagement: A search of the voter fraud tracking site compiled and maintained by conservative think-tank, The Heritage Foundation, for all instances of voter fraud in Oregon between 1982 and 2024 (42 years), resulted in a total of 17. That's less than half an instance of voter fraud per year; so basically, none. There is no fraud. Further, any claims that in-person votes will be more secure than mail-in due to a highly unlikely risk of fire are readily refuted by news reports stating the ballot box that was set on fire only affected three voters and our robust, state of the art mail-in system was able to contact the individuals so they could re-vote.

A legacy to honor and trust: Mail-in voting was first approved for a test run in 1981 by the Oregon Legislature, and by 1987 was made permanent and a majority of counties were using it for local and special elections. By 1993, Oregon held the first special statewide election by mail, and from there vote by mail continued to expand. It is inefficient to attempt to roll out in-person voting when our mail-in system has operated smoothly and trouble free for generations. Voting by mail allows voters to carefully consider each candidate and ballot measure before casting a vote. Informed voters make informed choices. And voting by mail empowers more individuals to

participate in our American democracy. There is no choice more patriotic than continuing vote by mail. Voting is the most powerful tradition in America and we owe it to ourselves and to everyone in Oregon to protect and encourage the democratic right to vote by continuing the proven, time tested mail in ballot.

Please do not ruin this excellent system by replacing it with this proposed requirement of in-person voting. Thank you for considering my testimony.