

Submitter: Gary Aldrich
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

Testimony in Opposition to SB 210

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gary Aldrich, and I am a resident of Portland and grew up in Bend and Astoria. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 210, which would upend our state's highly successful vote-by-mail system in favor of mandatory in-person voting with limited exceptions.

Oregon has been a pioneer and national leader in mail-in voting since 1998, consistently demonstrating that vote-by-mail is secure, accessible, and effective. Data shows that it increases voter participation and reduces barriers for working families, people with disabilities, rural communities, and others who may not be able to easily reach a polling place on Election Day.

On a personal note, I have relied on vote-by-mail my entire adult life. It allows me to research issues and candidates in the comfort of my home, consult with family members or trusted sources, and cast my ballot deliberately and securely. The convenience it offers is not a luxury—it is a cornerstone of inclusive civic participation. Without it, I fear that turnout will drop, and many Oregonians will be disenfranchised simply due to scheduling conflicts, transportation limitations, or physical constraints.

Multiple studies back this up. The Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research found that universal vote-by-mail increases turnout by about 2 percentage points overall, with no evidence of partisan advantage (SIEPR, 2020). The National Vote at Home Institute further highlights how vote-by-mail improves equity, especially for younger voters and voters of color, who have historically lower turnout rates in in-person systems.

SB 210 is a solution in search of a problem. It adds unnecessary burdens, including government ID requirements and logistical barriers, and would eliminate a system that has been secure, popular, and effective for decades. If passed, it risks decreasing participation and increasing administrative costs without any clear benefit.

I urge you to reject this bill and continue to protect Oregon's proud legacy of voter accessibility.

Respectfully,
Gary Aldrich
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