

Submitter:

Karen LaBonte

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB210

Oregon leads the nation in its efforts to make voting available for as many people as possible. With mail-in voting, we have created a model for positive civic engagement.

Mail-in voting has its roots in the deepest sentiments of our founding fathers.

Consider this comment from John Adams:

"We electors have an important constitutional power placed in our hands; we have a check upon two branches of the legislature . . . the power I mean of electing at stated periods [each] branch. . . . It becomes necessary to every [citizen] then, to be in some degree a statesman, and to examine and judge for himself of the tendency of political principles and measures. Let us examine, then, with a sober, a manly . . . and a Christian spirit; let us neglect all party [loyalty] and advert to facts; let us believe no man to be infallible or impeccable in government any more than in religion; take no man's word against evidence, nor implicitly adopt the sentiments of others who may be deceived themselves, or may be interested in deceiving us."

Echoing John Adams' sentiment, Samuel Adams called voting "one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country."

John Jay pointed out that Americans were unique in the world in our ability to choose our own leaders:

"The Americans are the first people whom Heaven has favored with an opportunity of deliberating upon and choosing the forms of government under which they should live."

The Founders, in short, believed that American citizens have a duty to vote with thoughtfulness and intentionality. We have received a rich inheritance from previous generations, men and women who protected our constitutional republic and gave us the ability to make our voices heard. It's our obligation to use that inheritance wisely and pass it on to future generations.

Attorney Christie Nicholson, J.D. lists these pros for the mail-in model:

Reduction in mail-ballot fraud. The conservative Heritage Foundation examined the record in Oregon. The state has used mail elections since 1998. They found 14 cases of attempted mail fraud out of 15.5 million ballots cast. This is an incredibly low incidence of voting fraud compared with the potential for fraud with traditional voting methods.

Mail-in voting increases voter participation. A Stanford University study found that voting turnout increased by 2% in states with vote-by-mail options.

There is no evidence to suggest that voting by mail favors one party over another. The Stanford study found that the increase in voting changed the amount of voting but not the composition of eligible voters. It didn't favor any racial, age, or economic groups.

It creates better-informed voters by allowing voters more time to consider their votes, increasing down-ballot engagement. This is as compared with in-person voting.

Mail-in voting reduces the cost of recruiting and training poll workers. This allows local election officials and county election officials to focus on other problems.

It eases the task of finding suitable polling locations.

In our household, mail-in voting has become a time of family bonding. We gather over a meal, voting materials piled around us, and proceed to review the candidates and the measures. Although we are all active church-goers, we belong to different churches. Voting has become the way we affirm, together, our dedication to the values we hold most dear.

As a Stage 4 lung cancer patient, mail-in voting made it possible for me to have my voice heard during a time I was too ill to even consider requesting an absentee ballot, let alone go to a polling place.

Eliminating mail-in voting seems profoundly un-American at best, and cruel at the most basic level. I strongly oppose this bill.