

Submitter:

Andrew Berlant

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB210

I strongly support Senate Bill 210, sponsored by Senator Smith DB, which enhances the integrity, accessibility, and transparency of Oregon's elections. By prioritizing in-person voting while retaining alternatives, it restores confidence in our democracy. I commend its intent and offer suggestions to strengthen it further for all Oregonians. First, I back the bill's focus on in-person voting on Election Day per ORS 254.465. Ensure this option remains open to all who prefer it, without hurdles, alongside mail-in requests for those unable. This empowers direct engagement, fostering trust and community.

Second, replace election machines and tally systems (ORS 254.485(5)) with hand-counted ballots by trained personnel. Machines raise skepticism; a "people-powered" approach eliminates error or tampering concerns, boosts confidence, and engages citizens as election workers.

Third, I applaud retaining mail-in ballots for elderly and disadvantaged citizens (ORS 254.465(2)). This ensures equitable access, and I suggest stating it "should, of course, continue" to protect these groups.

Fourth, make Election Day a state holiday. With in-person voting standard, this removes work barriers, increases participation, and underscores civic duty.

Fifth, enhance county clerk oversight with chain-of-custody rules and video cameras in ballot areas—voting booths, storage, and counting—per ORS 254.474. Live internet feeds let citizens monitor in real time, raising trust and accountability.

Sixth, regulate government contractors handling ballot or voter data. Ban sharing or selling it, except to law enforcement and election officials, with violations as crimes. Limit storage to the U.S., exclude foreign access, and keep data off internet-connected networks. This safeguards privacy and complements the bill's integrity focus.

Finally, mandate paper ballots with security features like currency—watermarks, microtext, serial numbers—under ORS 254.465. This deters fraud and ensures verifiable votes, bolstering public faith.

SB 210 advances Oregon's elections with in-person voting, ID requirements, and streamlined deadlines. My suggestions—preserving in-person options, hand-counting, mail-in access, a holiday, clerk oversight, contractor rules, and secure ballots—enhance its impact. Together, they restore democratic confidence, boost civic engagement, and protect every vote.

Please consider these ideas and pass SB 210 with strong support. Thank you for strengthening Oregon's democracy. I'm available to discuss further.