

Submitter:

Michael Zephyr

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB210

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 210, which would fundamentally alter Oregon's successful vote-by-mail system.

For over two decades, Oregon has been a national leader in election administration through our vote-by-mail system. This system has consistently demonstrated numerous benefits that would be lost if Senate Bill 210 were to pass:

**Increased Voter Participation:** Vote-by-mail has helped Oregon achieve consistently high voter turnout rates. It removes barriers to voting by eliminating the need to take time off work, arrange transportation, or wait in long lines on a single day. Requiring in-person voting would inevitably suppress participation, particularly among working families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those in rural communities.

**Cost Efficiency:** Oregon's vote-by-mail system has proven to be more cost-effective than operating numerous polling places with the staff, equipment, and security they require. This bill would significantly increase election costs for counties and the state.

**Proven Security:** Our current system has multiple safeguards to ensure election integrity, including signature verification and ballot tracking. Studies and audits have repeatedly shown that Oregon's vote-by-mail system is secure, with virtually no evidence of widespread fraud. The proposed ID requirements would add unnecessary obstacles without meaningful security benefits.

**Convenience and Thoughtful Voting:** Vote-by-mail gives voters time to research candidates and measures at home, allowing for more informed decision-making than often occurs in a voting booth under time pressure.

**Reliability During Emergencies:** The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that vote-by-mail systems are resilient during public health crises or natural disasters when in-person voting becomes difficult or dangerous.

The bill's requirement that ballots must be returned by Election Day rather than postmarked by Election Day would disenfranchise voters whose ballots are delayed through no fault of their own. Additionally, removing the requirement for the state to pay return postage creates an unfair financial barrier to voting.

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has been studied and emulated by other states precisely because it works so well. It represents a rare example of policy that

enhances both access and security simultaneously. Dismantling this system would be a tremendous step backward for our democratic process.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 210 and preserve Oregon's gold-standard voting system that ensures every eligible voter can easily and securely cast their ballot.