

Submitter: D Torres
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR30
Chair & Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT SJR 30. I believe that this proposal is a thoughtful and necessary step toward improving the democratic process in Oregon. The proposal addresses several key issues that will make our system of direct democracy more representative, equitable, and accessible.

The current system for collecting initiative petition signatures does not always adequately reflect Oregon's diversity. By requiring that petition signatures be distributed across the state's congressional districts, the amendment ensures that initiatives and constitutional amendments have support from all parts of the state, not just the more densely populated urban areas. This change will help ensure that initiatives are truly statewide in nature and that the voices of rural and less-populated areas are not overlooked or excluded in the legislative process.

This requirement for equal representation across districts is critical for maintaining the integrity of our initiative process. It helps guarantee that any law or constitutional amendment proposed reflects the will of Oregonians as a whole, rather than just the majority in a single region or metropolitan area.

By dividing the signature requirements equally among the congressional districts, the proposed amendment will ensure that smaller and rural districts, which often have fewer people and resources, are not unfairly disadvantaged. Currently, the initiative process can be skewed by the fact that many signatures are gathered in urban areas, where populations are larger, and it can be more challenging for rural districts to have a significant voice in the process. This proposal makes sure that every district has a fair and equal opportunity to contribute to the initiative process, improving the overall equity of the system.

The higher threshold for signatures for constitutional amendments (10%) compared to laws (8%) is a reasonable and appropriate distinction. Constitutional amendments carry far-reaching and long-term consequences and requiring a higher percentage of support across the state ensures that such significant changes have more widespread, substantive backing.

It is important that this system works in a way that reflects the true will of the people and upholds the principles of representative democracy. The proposed amendment to the constitution ensures that the initiative process will be more inclusive,

thoughtful, and reflective of the diverse viewpoints across Oregon, rather than allowing it to be dominated by specific regions or interest groups.

By requiring petition signatures to come from across the state, this measure will likely lead to more grassroots-level engagement and involvement. Campaigns for initiatives will need to connect with Oregonians in all corners of the state, which will encourage broader discussions and more thorough consideration of the issues at hand. This fosters a more engaged electorate and promotes a stronger sense of civic participation.

One of the core values of the initiative process is that it gives Oregonians a direct voice in shaping their laws and constitution. However, to ensure that this voice is meaningful, it is important that initiatives reflect a broad consensus of support. The amendment proposed today ensures that signature gathering efforts do not concentrate in just a few regions but are instead spread throughout the state. This improves the legitimacy of initiatives and ensures that proposals with limited regional support do not make their way onto the ballot, preserving the integrity and purpose of the initiative process.

It provides a clear incentive for petitioners to consider how their proposals will impact people across the state and to craft their initiatives in a way that resonates with Oregonians from all walks of life.

I strongly support the proposed amendment to the Oregon Constitution.