

Submitter: Benjamin Tidwell
On Behalf Of: Oregonians
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 210, which threatens to undermine Oregon's long-standing and successful vote-by-mail system, which has increased voter participation and ensured secure, accessible elections for decades.

First and foremost, SB 210 imposes unnecessary barriers to voting. By making in-person voting the default and requiring voters to request a mail-in ballot only if they are unable to vote in person, the bill creates an extra layer of bureaucracy that could discourage participation—especially among seniors, people with disabilities, rural voters, and those with work or caregiving responsibilities. Oregon's vote-by-mail system has been a national model for secure, high-turnout elections, and there is no evidence to suggest it needs to be replaced with an in-person system.

Additionally, the requirement for government-issued photo identification to vote or request a ballot disproportionately impacts historically marginalized communities. Many eligible voters, particularly those who are low-income, elderly, or living in rural areas, may not have access to the necessary identification. This creates an unnecessary hurdle to exercising a fundamental right and risks disenfranchising legitimate voters.

Furthermore, removing state-paid postage for mail-in ballots amounts to a hidden poll tax, forcing voters to pay to cast their ballots. While the cost of a stamp may seem small, for those facing financial hardship, it can be a deterrent to voting. Ensuring free and fair elections means making voting as accessible as possible—not adding financial barriers.

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has consistently proven to be secure, cost-effective, and successful in encouraging voter participation. There is no justification for dismantling a process that has worked so well for so many years. Instead of restricting access to the ballot, our state should focus on expanding voter engagement and making elections even more accessible for all Oregonians.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose SB 210. This bill does not improve election security or integrity—it only makes it harder for eligible voters to participate. Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your service to our state and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further.