

Submitter: Jennifer Holm
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210
Opposition to Oregon's 2025 Senate Bill 210:

I strongly oppose Oregon's 2025 Senate Bill 210, which seeks to make in-person voting the standard method for conducting elections. While the intention to ensure secure and accessible voting is important, this bill fails to account for the diversity of voter needs and the challenges that many Oregonians face in participating in elections.

1. Voter Accessibility:

In-person voting may present significant barriers to many citizens, particularly those in rural areas, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and those who may face transportation challenges. Oregon has long been a leader in expanding access to the ballot through mail-in voting, which provides flexibility for voters who may be unable to attend polling places on Election Day. Mandating in-person voting could disenfranchise these groups, undermining the progress Oregon has made in ensuring inclusive participation in elections.

2. Public Health and Safety Concerns:

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the risks of in-person voting during public health crises. While in-person voting may be safe under normal circumstances, we must remain vigilant about potential health risks, especially in the face of future pandemics or natural disasters. Mail-in voting offers a safer alternative, minimizing the risk of spreading infectious diseases, particularly among vulnerable populations.

3. The Success of Mail-In Voting:

Oregon's mail-in voting system has been a model for the nation, with high voter turnout and accessibility. This system allows voters to cast their ballots at their convenience, without the pressure of long lines or time constraints. Eliminating or restricting this option in favor of in-person voting could lead to lower turnout, particularly among people who find it difficult to go to a polling station during working hours or who have other scheduling conflicts.

4. Environmental and Economic Impact:

Mandating in-person voting could increase the environmental impact and costs associated with running elections. More polling stations would be needed, along with additional staff and resources to ensure the smooth operation of in-person voting. These costs could be better directed toward improving accessibility for all voters, including expanding access to mail-in ballots for those who need them.

5. Voter Confidence:

For many voters, the convenience and accessibility of mail-in voting have increased confidence in the election process. SB 210 risks eroding that trust by introducing unnecessary complications and barriers to participation. We must prioritize making voting as accessible as possible to ensure that all eligible voters can have their voices heard.

Conclusion:

Rather than imposing in-person voting as the standard, Oregon should continue to champion policies that expand access and flexibility for all voters. Maintaining and improving the mail-in voting system, while ensuring robust in-person options for those who prefer them, is the best approach for preserving voter rights and fostering high participation rates. We urge lawmakers to reconsider SB 210 and focus on policies that ensure Oregon remains a leader in voter access and democracy.