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Chair Kayse Jama
 House Committee on Rules
 900 Court Street NE
 Salem, Oregon 97301

Testimony on HB 4143

North Star Civic Foundation is providing the below information to support the Senate Committee on Rules to ensure that the interests of all Oregonians are effectively represented in the US Congress, in particular when a vacancy occurs in either of Oregon's two US Senate seats, the focus of SB 952. We are heartened to see the Oregon Legislature considering legislation like SB 952 that improves our democratic participatory processes. We hope you find our information useful in your deliberations.

North Star Civic Foundation is a non-partisan think tank and private foundation focused on policies and administration related to a free and open democracy and economic prosperity.

CURRENT PROCESS DELAYS REPRESENTATION

When a vacancy occurs within Oregon's congressional delegation, a special election is called by the Governor under the terms listed in Table 1. Because of the length of time needed to hold a special election, Oregonians could be without full representation in the US Senate for months. If these months include key Senate votes on issues relevant to Oregonian's interests, this lack of representation could have profound impacts.

Because of the seniority system in the US Senate where Oregon's senators sit on or chair key committees, Oregon stands to be impacted more than other states. A delay in filling a vacancy compounds that loss of representation.

Table 1. Oregon's Current Vacancy Replacement Process ORS: 188.120-1

Timing of Vacancy	Special Election
61 days before the general election	Special election is called.
After 62 days before the general election	Special election is called as soon as practicable after the general election.

If the special election is called before the 80th day of vacancy, each political party will provide a nominee for the ballot. If the special election is called after the 79th day of vacancy, a special primary election will be held.

SB 952 SHORTENS US SENATE VACANCY, FOLLOWS MAJORITY OF STATES

The majority of states, 37 total, authorizes the governor to appoint a replacement to serve the remainder of the vacated term under specific conditions. Oregon is one of 13 states that call a special election to fill a US Senate vacancy, and one of four that do not provide for interim gubernatorial appointments. The other states are North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. (Source: [National Council on State Legislatures](#))

SB 952 would provide for an interim appointment until the next general election determines a permanent replacement. The governor would have 30 days within the date of the vacancy to make an interim appointment. The appointee would need to be a member of the same political party of the former US Senator for at least 180 days prior to the vacancy.

If passed, SB 952 would minimize the length of time without federal representation.

TIMING IDEAL FOR GOOD HOUSEKEEPING MEASURES

This is an ideal time for this kind of “good housekeeping” bill because there is no current vacancy or any impending vacancy in either of Oregon’s US Senate positions that would create a supercharged political environment. We hope the Legislature takes advantage of this timing to consider a good housekeeping policy.

North Star Civic Foundation supports efforts that maximize Oregon’s constitutional right to participate in the US Senate’s deliberations. Representation is an essential democratic principle. We encourage the Senate Rules Committee to seriously consider SB 952 and/or similar ways to ensure Oregon is ably represented. We are available to help with additional research or other resources that will aid in your deliberations.