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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR30

Testimony in Opposition to Measure SJR 30
Submitted by Julie Niles-Fry, Oregon Resident
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I stand in firm opposition to Measure SJR 30, a proposed amendment to the Oregon Constitution that threatens to dismantle one of the most fundamental rights of Oregonians: the ability to petition our government and propose solutions to the problems we face. Far from being a neutral adjustment to the initiative process, SJR 30 is a calculated effort to cripple the people's voice, intimidate grassroots participation, and reserve the power of change for wealthy lobbyists and entrenched politicians. This measure doesn't just raise the bar—it builds an impenetrable wall around the ballot, ensuring that only the elite can scale it.

Oregon's initiative process has long been a vital tool for citizens to address issues ignored or mishandled by the legislature. Yet SJR 30 seeks to suffocate this democratic tradition with what can only be described as death-by-overregulation. By increasing signature requirements to 8% of votes cast in the last gubernatorial election for statutory initiatives (a 25% jump) and 10% for constitutional amendments (a 33% increase), this measure already makes it exponentially harder for ordinary people to get their ideas heard. But it doesn't stop there. The addition of a new mandate—that signatures must be equally distributed across all six congressional districts—introduces a logistical nightmare designed to void thousands of legitimate signatures and drive up costs beyond reach.

The numbers speak for themselves. Oregon Watchdog has pointed out that politicians have already reduced citizen-led petitions by 80% through prior restrictions, often forcing campaigns to spend a million dollars just to qualify. SJR 30 takes this assault further, aiming for a 99% decline by layering on these extreme burdens. The equal-distribution scheme is a fabricated hurdle that disregards Oregon's diverse geography and population. For rural residents like me in a small town like Rogue River, gathering enough signatures in a sparsely populated district is already a steep challenge—yet this rule demands we match urban centers, or our efforts get sidelined. Meanwhile, in a densely populated urban area—say, Portland—where an issue might resonate deeply, a surplus of signatures could be discarded simply because it exceeds an arbitrary quota. This isn't fairness; it's censorship dressed up as reform.

For the average Oregonian, these changes are not just discouraging, they're

intimidating. The message is clear: unless you have deep pockets or political connections, your ideas don't belong on the ballot. Grassroots movements, which often start with little more than passion and a practical solution, will be crushed under the weight of these requirements. Meanwhile, the ultra-rich and their lobbyists—who can afford to hire signature-gathering firms and navigate these obstacles—will dominate the process, leaving everyday citizens sidelined.

I urge this committee to recognize SJR 30 as an attack on our right to participate in democracy. It doesn't protect the integrity of the initiative process; it strangles it. If this measure moves forward, the ability to propose bold, problem-solving ideas will be reserved for the powerful few, while the rest of us are silenced. I implore you to reject SJR 30 and protect the voice of Oregon's citizens—because democracy thrives when all of us, not just the privileged, can shape our future.

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