

Submitter: Andrew Hall

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB952

Testimony Opposing Oregon Senate Bill 952

Submitted April 3, 2025 I oppose SB 952, which would let the governor appoint temporary U.S. Senator replacements. This bill undermines voter choice and mirrors an existing problem with Oregon's judiciary, where judges—claimed to be elected—are overwhelmingly governor-appointed after retirements, then rarely challenged as incumbents. Currently, Oregon fills Senate vacancies via special elections, ensuring voters decide. SB 952 shifts this power to the governor, risking political cronyism. A governor could appoint allies—or weak opponents if the vacancy crosses party lines—giving appointees incumbent advantages in later elections. This isn't hypothetical; we see it with judges. Most Oregon Supreme Court justices, for instance, were appointed by Governors Brown or Kotek after strategic retirements. Once in, they face little opposition—voters rarely oust incumbents. This bill would extend that flaw to senators, eroding democracy further. Special elections, though slower, keep power with the people, not the executive. SB 952's 80-150 day election window still leaves a gap where an unelected appointee could serve, potentially swaying key votes. Oregonians deserve representation they choose, not a governor's pick. The judicial appointment issue proves this system tilts toward entrenchment, not accountability. Reject SB 952 to protect voter sovereignty.