



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 20, 2015

CONTACT: Scott Moore (503) 986-1904
or scott.moore@state.or.us

Historic Voter Registration Expansion Bill Passes Oregon House *Goal of NEW Motor Voter Bill is to put a ballot in the hands of every eligible voter*

Salem, OR—The Oregon House of Representatives today passed a historic bill that will dramatically expand access to Oregon elections.

House Bill 2177 will make voter registration simpler, more convenient, and more secure by using the data that the DMV currently collects for drivers' licenses. The updated process will provide simple and accurate voter registration to eligible voters and will update address information for people who have already registered.

An estimated 300,000 currently unregistered—but eligible—voters will now get ballots at election time, giving them the opportunity to weigh in on the issues that affect their families and their communities. Current election laws mean that many students, young people, and working parents lose the ability to vote if they move and don't update their voter registration information. HB 2177 would end that practice by automatically updating voter registration information when someone moves—or when someone isn't registered.

By utilizing the existing DMV system, which requires stringent proof-of-citizenship, it will now be easier to determine whether someone is eligible to register to vote in Oregon, increasing the security of Oregon's voter registration system. Importantly, HB 2177 protects the privacy of minors and others who have privacy protections through the DMV.

At the same time, the bill will greatly expand voting access to all eligible voters.

“While many other state legislatures in the country are actively working to limit voter participation,” says House Majority Leader Val Hoyle (D-Junction City & West Eugene), who carried the bill on the House floor, “Oregon has the opportunity to move in the opposite direction: Removing unnecessary, outdated barriers to voting and making sure that every eligible voter has a chance to cast a ballot.”

The goal of the NEW Motor Voter is to increase voter participation in every corner of the state. Oregon's experience with Vote By Mail has shown that when the voting process is made simpler and more convenient, more people will participate. NEW Motor Voter is a continuation of that evolution in Oregon's pioneering elections system.

"I believe that every barrier in the way of participation is a barrier too high for somebody," said Rep. Lew Frederick (D-N & NE Portland). "And I believe that those barriers do not rise equally before all segments of the electorate; specific groups are more likely to be excluded by such barriers, and that should be an affront to all of us who believe in how we decide things in the country. I believe that everyone counts, and House Bill 2177 will make sure that more voices are heard."

HB 2177 passed the House by a vote of 35-24 and will now go to the Senate for consideration.

###