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House Votes to Increase Access to the Ballot Box, Making Election Materials Available in Multiple Languages

House Bill 3021 will require the Secretary of State to create and make election materials publicly available in the five most common languages spoken in the state

SALEM, OR—Part of a [concerted effort](#) to expand democratic participation, today the House passed [House Bill 3021](#), which would make election materials publicly available in the five most common languages spoken in the state other than English. The bill will promote greater civic engagement, increasing access to the ballot for Oregon’s diverse and growing democracy.

“Oregonians are diverse, but we’re united by certain shared values. We are united by our belief in democracy, our belief that the vote is sacred, and that your voice matters and your right to express it is protected. We know that the right to vote includes the right to understand what you’re voting for because elections matter,” said [Rep. Khanh Pham](#) (D-Portland), chief sponsor of the bill. “I believe that a person’s desire to understand what they’re voting on, to learn about the issues, and to be civically engaged, should be commended, and something our state will better facilitate in our democracy with the passage of this bill.”

The legislation would require the Secretary of State (SOS), who oversees the state’s elections process, to make the materials publicly available for county election departments and voters. The SOS would need to ensure materials, like voters’ pamphlets that provide essential information about who is running and what is on the ballot, are translated online and when mailed to voters. The measure would also establish a Translation Advisory Council and would require the SOS to consult with the council on the translation of voter materials.

Oregon would not be alone in making voter materials in different languages available. [Under federal law](#), over 260 jurisdictions are required to provide language assistance. Several states, including Washington and California, already mandate and provide election materials to voters in multiple languages.

This bill forms part of legislation passed this year that would expand the democratic process, including [House Bill 3291](#), which would ensure ballots postmarked on or before Election Day are accepted if received seven days after.

HB 3021 passed 36-16 with bipartisan support and now heads to the Senate for consideration.

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