



**REPRESENTATIVE JULIE PARRISH
OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE DISTRICT 37**

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Representative Julie Parrish chastises House Rules Democrats for stripping citizen rights in an elections power grab

SB 229 amendments would allow Democrats to hijack a 115-year Constitutional right of Oregon Citizens

Salem, Ore. - Representative Julie Parrish (R-Tualatin/West Linn) chastised Democratic leadership today for passing amendments to SB 229, which would grant the majority party broad and overreaching powers to manipulate election dates and draft ballot titles. Rep. Parrish likened the effort to attack Oregonians' rights to refer legislation to the ballot akin to voter suppression and an abuse of power by majority Democrats.

"Amendments to this bill have popped up at the eleventh-hour; they're designed to circumvent our normal election process," said Rep. Parrish, who testified in opposition the SB 229 amendments this afternoon in the House Rules Committee. "Like many bills in these last few days, citizens of this state are being stripped of their ability to provide input. Today's committee work session on newly introduced partisan amendments to an otherwise unanimously bi-partisan bill from the Senate, allowed not one everyday citizen to speak their concerns. It's precisely why people support the referendum process. Moreover, the Democrats on the committee wanted to make this issue personal, rather than about the policy issues at hand."

Rep. Parrish was specifically critical of several provisions of the -10 and -11 amendments, including:

- Arbitrarily setting a special election date for any measure passed by the Legislature during the 2017 session and referred by Oregon voters to be held on January 23, 2018, which would inevitably drive down turnout;
- Grant lawmakers the authority to draft ballot titles for potential referendums and remove nearly three weeks of the public comment process voters currently enjoy under the existing law. The drafting would be done by a partisan committee made up of a majority of legislative Democrats;
- Allow lawmakers to draft explanatory statements for potential referendums;
- Requires millions of additional taxpayer dollars to be spent in order to facilitate a special election held in January.
- Require elections workers in 36 counties to have to cancel holiday plans with their families to run a special January election. Oregon currently has four regularly calendared elections in March, May, September and November.

Representative Parrish noted in the testimony that as someone who grew up in the social system with government-sponsored healthcare, her aim in a referral is not to gut Medicaid, but to hold it accountable for the billions of dollars the state has potentially overpaid and the loss of hundreds of millions in failed IT software projects by a mismanaged state agency. Further, Parrish believes there were three other bill possibilities which could have covered a Medicaid shortfall. None were given hearings by House Democrats.

“Today, I received a letter from one of my constituents who was told Regence would no longer cover his insurance in 2018 because the market is unstable in Oregon. We further destabilize healthcare every time we drive costs into the system, like the mandated coverage for elective services, failed agency management and lack of oversight by the Executive branch, new taxes, and sweetheart deals for politically well-connected special interests. What we’re doing to healthcare is unsustainable.”

Parrish referenced testimony on HB 3391 on the floor today where Democrats stated that healthcare is a “basic human right” as they passed a new mandate onto insurance companies while swiping nearly \$11 million of general fund dollars in the process. “If healthcare is human right, or a universal right, then why would we tax it?” she said.

She also expressed deep concern for who would be forced to bear the cost of the new taxes in HB 2391. “College students, small businesses, non-profits, our K-12 budget, and individuals will be subject to yet another carve out for big businesses and insurance companies who either won’t pay the taxes or will be pass them to ratepayers.” Section 8 of House Bill 2391 gives insurance companies express permission to pass taxes on the ratepayers. “In what world we think that memorializing into law that corporations can pass taxes to citizens is ok?”

Following Representative Parrish’s testimony, the House Rules Committee adopted the controversial -11 amendment and referred SB 229 to the Joint Ways and Means Committee for further consideration.

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