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Former foes find common ground on civics education bill

SB 1038 requires high school seniors to pass a civics test to graduate

SALEM – Former political adversaries Sen. Chuck Riley (D-Hillsboro) and former Sen. Bruce Starr (R-Hillsboro) – whom Riley unseated for the Senate District 15 seat – see eye to eye on the importance of civics education in schools, and together they are advancing a bill to increase knowledge about that topic.

Senate Bill 1038 – which currently is in the Senate Committee on Education – would require high school seniors to pass a proficiency test on civics to graduate from high school.

“Educating the next generation of young voters is an inherent obligation of our generation,” Riley said.

Riley’s passion for civics and educating today’s young people stems from his community involvement and prior military service. Riley and Starr have a long history of working against each other, having run for the Oregon Senate against each other twice, with Starr winning the first contest and Riley taking the rematch.

“There won’t be a third election,” Starr said. “It’s more enjoyable to work with Senator Riley than against him.”

SB 1038 is an example of a pragmatic approach to making Oregon better. Focusing on civics education will inform, prepare and educate students in the political process. An informed electorate is an effective electorate. The bill will help ensure Oregon continues to be a leader in voter turnout and engagement.

The efforts between Riley and Starr is a unique effort by two former rivals who are actively working on a bill together.

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