



## **OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS**

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Oregon Senate Approves Memorials and Resolution Calling for End to Racist Legacy of Slavery**

SALEM – The Oregon Senate approved three measures today that make progress to end and repair the racist legacy of slavery in Oregon and the United States in the interest of racial justice and addressing relics of systemic racism. Senate Joint Memorial 2, Senate Joint Memorial 4 and Senate Joint Resolution 10 were championed by Oregon Senate Democrats and received broad support on the Senate Floor.

The legacy of slavery continues to be a substantial problem in Oregon. The Memorials and Resolution passed today seek action to remove antiquated language from our federal and state constitutions and to study ways to repair and heal those who have suffered from historic racism.

Senate Joint Memorial 2 urges Congress to amend the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which outlawed slavery, to omit the clause that makes an exception for criminal punishment, removing the racist legacy of slavery in this critical, guiding document.

“Our constitutions should no longer provide a loophole for slavery by allowing slavery and involuntary servitude as punishment,” said Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego) who chief sponsored SJM 2 and SJR 10.

Jordynn, an 11 year old, testified during the hearing on these measures. She said, “By disallowing involuntary servitude we can improve the way people think and the way people feel inside and outside the criminal justice system...people should not be considered as property or considered anything less than human.”

“Jordynn is absolutely right,” said Senator Wagner. “Under our current system too many are considered ‘property or less than human’ and we must actively work against that.”

Senate Joint Resolution 10 would refer a change in Oregon’s constitution to the voters to remove language allowing slavery and involuntary servitude for punishment of a crime, when a party has been duly convicted. When approved by the House of Representative and signed into law, it will appear on the next general election ballot in November 2022.

“I see racism everywhere I go, and I have experienced it. It is long embedded within the fabric of our state’s history – it is even codified in Oregon’s Constitution by allowing slavery and involuntary servitude as punishment,” said Senator James I. Manning Jr. (D-Eugene) who introduced SJR 10. “We know BIPOC Oregonians are disproportionately incarcerated and therefore disproportionately still enslaved. If we want to end racism, our most important documents should demonstrate that loud and clear,” Senator Manning Jr. added.

Senate Joint Memorial 4 urges Congress to pass [House Resolution 40](#), which would establish the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans – providing a step forward on the path toward restorative justice.

“As W.E.B. Dubois said, ‘The nation has not yet found peace from its sins.’ By passing SJM 4 and encouraging Congress to pass HR 40, we offer an opportunity to get closer in discovering that peace,” said Senator Lew Frederick (D-N/NE Portland) who carried SJM 4. “The lasting effects of slavery, Jim Crow laws and so-called Black Codes have been passed down through generations and are felt today. They are felt in the fear Black men and women experience every day, the air quality where we live; it is felt in school segregation, our average incomes, our long-term outcomes and our life expectancy. We *can* and should work to right these wrongs, the Senate demonstrated its willingness to do so today.”

Senate Joint Memorial 2 passed 27-2, Senate Joint Memorial 4 passed 20-9 and Senate Joint Resolution 10 passed 27-2. All three measures now move to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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