



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate Committee on Rules Hears Measure to Protect Democracy

SALEM – Today the Senate Committee on Rules heard testimony on a resolution proposing a change to what constitutes a quorum, and an amendment proposing a change to how walkouts affect a Legislative Session. The Democratic members of the committee, which is chaired by Majority Leader Ginny Burdick (D-Portland), received testimony from elected officials and members of the public. Republican members were again marked absent.

SJR 201 is a measure to prevent minority walkouts from wrecking an entire Legislative Session and paralyzing government.

As introduced, SJR 201 would change quorum requirements to a simple majority bringing Oregon in alignment with 46 other states. This will ensure a minority walkout does not harm every day Oregonians who are counting on lawmakers to do their jobs and pass critical Legislation.

A proposed amendment to SJR 201 changes how Legislative Session days are counted. Legislative Session days are limited to 160 in odd-numbered years and 35 in even-numbered years. Current law sets a limit on the length of session using a “calendar day” count.

The amendment would instead count a “session day” against the day limit. A “session day” is defined in the Rules of the Senate as “a day during which the Senate is convened in floor session with a quorum present.” The amendment would prevent a session from timing out when a minority refuses to show up for work.

“Republicans walking off their taxpayer-paid jobs and running out the clock is an abuse of the system,” said Senator Burdick. “We need to prevent these elected lawmakers from completely destroying the Legislative Session when they abandon their oath of office for a taxpayer-paid vacation.”

The Senate Committee on Rules will vote on SJR 201 Thursday.

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