



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate votes for greater student access to democratic process

SB 1586 to improve voter registration outreach to college, university students

SALEM – The Oregon Senate today passed legislation that will improve access to the voting process for college and university students throughout the state.

Senate Bill 1586 – which passed by a 19-9 vote in the Senate – directs public universities and community colleges to increase voter registration access and information. The bill directs public universities and community colleges to do the following:

- Display a link to the Secretary of State’s voter registration tool on their websites or any other appropriate student-focused communication networks managed by the school;
- Give the school’s official student government, or its equivalent, the opportunity to provide nonpartisan voter information as part of student orientation programs, campus welcome events and resident life activities;
- Provide professional contact information for school faculty upon request of the school’s official student government or equivalent for the purpose of contacting faculty to seek permission to provide nonpartisan voter classroom presentations;
- Provide opportunities for students and student groups to provide nonpartisan registration services on non-reserved public spaces on school property; and
- Schools which own or operate student housing are to work with local county elections offices 3 months prior to primary and general elections to obtain address information of students living in on-campus housing and must ensure that information is available to the school’s student government.

Provisions of the bill regarding public universities and community colleges would become operative for the 2017-18 academic year. It also directs the Secretary of State to ensure there is at least one designated official ballot drop site location within 4 miles of each public university and community college main campus.

“Voting is a fundamental right, and I believe Oregon should continue to lead the way in reducing barriers to voting,” said Sen. Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), the bill’s sponsor. “SB 1586 creates universal standards for public universities and community colleges that makes it easier for students to register to vote and cast their

ballot. It is critical to engage young people, and this bill increases access to information that would help inform their vote.”

SB 1586 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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