NEWS RELEASE

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National Popular Vote bill clears Oregon State Senate
SB 870: Compact would ensure one person, one vote in presidential elections

SALEM – The Oregon Senate moved forward with legislation that will take the United States toward a national popular vote for presidential elections.

Senate Bill 870 – which passed with a bipartisan vote on the Senate floor today – makes Oregon part of the National Popular Vote Compact, an agreement between states where they will award their Electoral College votes to the presidential candidate who receives the most votes nationally. The authority to appoint electors is granted to each state "in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct," according to the United States Constitution.

"One of things I'm most proud of is how over the history of this country we've expanded the franchise and given voters more of a direct say in the election of our leaders," Sen. Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), who co-carried the bill with Sen. Brian Boquist (R-Dallas) on the Senate floor. "Over time we've decided that it's really important to have people have a direct say in the outcome of elections. We now have 14 other states and the District of Columbia in the compact, and it's being considered in a number of different states. It's way past time for Oregon to join them."

The United States Constitution establishes the Electoral College as the mechanism for choosing the President of the United States. Each state's votes are allocated based on the size of its Congressional delegation, with one vote for each member of the House of Representatives and one for each Senator. The candidate receiving the majority of those votes – 270 votes – is

named president. Currently, Oregon's seven Electoral College votes are awarded to the candidate who gets the most votes in the state.

Five times in United States history, the Electoral College system has produced a president who did not get the most votes nationally. That has occurred twice since 2000 – in the cases of George W. Bush in 2000 and Donald Trump in 2016.

"Since I have been eligible to vote, two of the three Presidents have been elected while losing the popular vote and this trend will only continue," Sen. Shemia Fagan (D-Portland) said. "Republicans in Oregon have long complained that their votes don't matter in the Presidential election. With a national popular vote, that sentiment is eliminated. All Oregon voters matter as much as any voter in Pennsylvania or Florida."

The National Popular Vote Compact will ensure – once enough states have joined to reach the victory threshold of 270 votes – that the candidate who earns the most votes nationally will win the presidency. The compact doesn't take effect until its members account for the 270 Electoral College necessary to achieve victory.

So far, 15 jurisdictions have adopted the compact. Those include California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Mexico and Washington. Those jurisdictions represent 189 Electoral College votes, about 70 percent of those necessary to make the compact legally binding.

"I support the bill. However, there are issues with the integrity of the vote count in other states that continue to concern me. The interstate compact falls short in addressing 'one person, one vote' if everyone's vote isn't being counted," said Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland). "That said, I have pictures of me, from years ago, walking along with a sandwich board, advocating for one person, one vote. The Electoral College gives a disproportionate voice to voters in some states over others and it's time for that to stop. In our modern society, we need to give the voters a direct say in who their leaders are. This bill moves us in that direction."

Senate Bill 870 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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