



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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*****Updated** to amend first quote***

April 28, 2025

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State Legislators Vote to Prevent Gaps in Oregon's Representation in U.S. Senate

Senate Bill 952 requires Governor to make appointments to vacancies in nation's capitol

SALEM, OR – A bill passed in the Oregon Senate today will require the Governor to appoint a new U.S. Senator in the event a seat becomes unexpectedly vacant. Current Oregon law requires the state leave a seat empty until holding a special election.

“Oregonians count on our US Senators every day. Our Senators ensure Oregon gets its share of resources, provide assistance with federal benefits such as social security and veterans benefits and coordinate with the State Department when Oregonians are in danger outside our nation’s borders,” said **Senator Sara Gelsler Blouin (D- Corvallis, Albany & South Salem)**, chief sponsor of the measure. “Under current law, if a U.S. Senator dies or resigns from office, Oregonians are deprived of representation for months. That is because Oregon is one of just four states that do not allow the Governor to make an appointment. Senate Bill 952 fixes that and will ensure Oregonians never go more than 30 days without a U.S. Senator fighting for them.”

Appointments under the measure are not permanent. Senate Bill 952 specifies that a special election still must be held for the seat, to occur between 80 and 150 days after the seat became vacant.

“This change will allow Oregon to have full representation in the U.S. Senate quickly and ensures the people of Oregon have the final say over who serves in the role for the duration of the term,” said **Senate Majority Leader Kayse Jama (D – Portland, Boring & Damascus)**.

After Oregon’s U.S. Senator Bob Packwood resigned October 1, 1995, Oregon was reduced to only one vote in the Senate for four months. The special election to replace him did not occur until January 30, 1996.

Today’s measure requires that any appointee:

- Be a citizen qualified to hold office

- Belong to the same political party as the U.S. Senator who left the seat
- Have at least a 180-day history as a member of the political party

Also under the measure, Governors are prohibited from appointing themselves to a vacant Senate seat.

Senate Bill 952 passed 16 to 13 and now moves to the Oregon House of Representatives.

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