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Bill to lower voting pre-registration age moves forward

SB 802 would create more seamless process for Oregon Motor Voter registration

SALEM – The Oregon State Senate passed a bill today that will allow 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote.

Senate Bill 802 – which passed by a 19-10 vote on the Senate floor – would make 16-year-olds eligible to pre-register to vote. In 2015, the Oregon Legislature passed and Gov. Kate Brown signed the Oregon Motor Voter law, which sets up a system of automatic voter registration – unless an individual chooses to opt out – to eligible Oregonians when they interact with the DMV. SB 802 matches the voter pre-registration age to when most Oregonians get their driver license, creating a more efficient process.

Currently, 17-year-olds can pre-register when they go to the DMV. Their registration is not added to the voter rolls until they turn 18. The same process now will apply to 16-year-olds.

“Many Oregonians interact with the DMV when they turn 16 and get their driver licenses,” said Sen. Kathleen Taylor (D-Portland), who is the chief sponsor of the bill. “Knowing this – and that we already are allowing 17-year-olds to pre-register – it makes sense to expand that age by one year. That way, young people are plugged in to our voter registration system when they are already interacting with the DMV and will not need to take an extra step later to register. That will save time and resources. We’re making a small, common sense, change that will be more efficient.”

Oregon has a long history of making voting more accessible through measures such as allowing 17-year-olds to pre-register and pioneering innovative new practices like vote by mail and

Oregon Motor Voter. Since the beginning of Motor Voter, 291,938 voters have registered through DMV.

It is estimated that around 20,000 16-year-olds from all over the state utilize DMV, and they would not have another interaction with DMV where they would be registered to vote until they are 24. This cuts out a potential six-year gap between the age of voting eligibility and voter registration for many Oregonians. Engaging people in the democratic process at a young age is shown to increase voter engagement in adulthood, and there is little to no cost to implement the age change.

SB 802 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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