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OREGON SENATE REPUBLICANS
PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2021

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**Senate Republicans Attempt Last Ditch Effort to Fix Democrats’
Loose Voting Law**

SALEM, Ore. – Democrats are charging forward with a bill that would open our election up to more possibilities of fraud with House Bill 3291.

At issue in HB 3291 are two key provisions. The first would require unpostmarked ballots that arrive up to 7 days after election day to be counted. This would allow someone to mail ballots up to 7 days after the election, and if they didn’t receive a postmark, it would be presumed valid. It would also make it easier for late unpostmarked ballots to be counted if brought into a elections office

The second would allow election officials to start counting ballots before election day. Politically motivated election officials could give candidates and campaigns running tallies on the vote count weeks before election day, giving favored campaigns and candidates an advantage in get-out-the-vote efforts.

“The longer and more drawn out the process, the greater chance for bad actors to tamper with votes,” Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod (R-Lyons). “There are decent parts in this bill, but these two provisions provide a freeway to fraud. How many letters does each of us get in the mail with a missing postmark? It’s not an insignificant number. We need to make it easier to vote and harder to cheat. This bill makes it easier to cheat.”

Despite Republican objections in committee, Senate Democrats refused to tighten up the bill’s language. Senate Republicans introduced a minority report on the Senate floor that would have fixed the two provisions and given the bill bipartisan support. Instead, Democrats rejected the changes along party lines on a vote of 12-17.

The Republican changes would have made unpostmarked ballots received after election day to be marked as “challenged,” giving voters the opportunity to prove they mailed it

before election day. It would also have disallowed county clerks to start counting ballots before election day.

Senate Republican Tim Knopp (R-Bend) authored SB 694 which would have extended the date in which voters can put their ballot in the mail to be counted. It would have also banned ballot harvesting, a process by which political operatives can deny equal access to the ballot box by collecting ballots from preferred voters.

“Coupled with ballot harvesting, this bill will make our election system ripe for bad actors,” Senator Knopp said. “I wrote SB 694 to allow Oregonians more time to get their ballot in, but the provisions in this bill will do nothing to promote confidence in our elections. The fixes Republicans proposed today are completely reasonable, and I fail to understand the Democrats' unwillingness to work with Republicans on the integrity of our elections.”

HB 3291 is also unclear how independent observers would be able to observe the counting of ballots by election officials if they can start counting as soon as they receive them.

HB 3291 barely passed the Senate with bipartisan opposition on a vote of 16-13, with the deciding Democrat Senator taking several seconds to decide how he wanted to vote. The bill will now head to the Governor's desk for her signature.

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