

Governance Updates

3/15/2021

By Norman Turrill, Governance Coordinator

Redistricting (Norman Turrill)

This week the two redistricting committees have begun a series of ten concurrent hearings ([see flyer](#)) focused on each of the five congressional districts of Oregon. Oregon law requires ten hearings before redistricting maps can be drawn. It would be particularly helpful for individuals to testify about what they think are the “communities of common interest” in their area. You might also express your desire for an independent redistricting commission. However, since census data will not be available until up to Sept. 30, these will likely not be the last opportunity for input into the process.

In the meantime, the [Oregon Legislative Assembly is asking the state's Supreme Court](#) to give it until as late as Dec. 30 to redraw the state's legislative districts — and to block the secretary of state from attempting to do so in the meantime. Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, also a Democrat, agrees with seeking clarity from the Supreme Court, but she is worried about disruption of the 2022 election cycle. Fagan also said that redistricting can be done by the constitutional deadlines using alternative data sets to map the districts.

Campaign Finance Reform (Norman Turrill)

[Senate Rules Committee: SB 336](#) prohibits candidates for state office from accepting contributions in excess of amounts specified and from sources not specified. This bill was heard 3/9 and is the first of several

on campaign finance reform (CFR). The League [submitted comment](#) and [verbal testimony](#) (at 1:10:12) in support of this bill.

Election Topics (Becky Gladstone)

Emergency Preparedness: The [Oregon ShakeAlert](#) program we worked last session went public March 11. See full information and how to enroll in our March 11 Legislative Report.

Statewide Candidate Filing: The concept described last week is forecast to be heard in House Rules, still in consultation with Legislative Counsel. This would pull in aspects of our 2019 proposed bills, [HB 2234](#) for ORESTAR replacement, and [HB 2685](#) to clarify candidate contact information.

[HB 2681](#) Voter roll retention: We [spoke in support](#) (at 15.45) of this bill and [submitted testimony](#) (in alignment with the federal For the People Act that is now SB 1 in Congress) to help reduce the numbers of Oregonian voters in “inactive status”, now 519,000. The bill evolved vigorously during the week, with a -2 amendment released hours before the hearing. Voters could not be deemed inactive for not voting or not updating voter registration. Inactive voter status would shift to “ballot curing”, usually for signature-match questions or forgetting to sign envelopes.

[SB 27](#) Omnibus elections bill: We [spoke in support](#) (at 1.24.45) [of this bill and submitted testimony](#) of this grab bag elections bill filed pre-session by outgoing Secretary of State Bev Clarno. For special district elections, it would replace the home address of chief petitioners on signature sheets, instead listing their home city and state, allow county website announcements for “notice of elections”, adding ballot measure titles. The petition signature threshold formula would change from last general election to last presidential election. Since those elections have higher voter turnout, the threshold would probably increase, but would remain

at 1%, significantly lower than the League position's recommendation of 6%.

[SB 776](#), [SJR 25](#) Voting Age: These two voting age bills were heard together in Senate Rules. We [commented on both in the hearing](#) (at 39 minutes), strongly supporting the concepts, simply lacking a specific position on the numerical voting age in question for each. We submitted League positions for [SB 776](#), permitting 16 or 17-year-olds (who are registered to vote) to cast ballots in school district elections, and for [SJR 25](#), calling to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 years old, in a general election, by referral to change the Oregon Constitution. This testimony repeated points we raised for [HB 2679](#) testimony, for those 17 at primary election dates, turning 18 by general election dates, to nominate political party candidates at primary, party rules allowing.

Electoral Systems (Barbara Klein)

[SB 791](#) (Dembrow, Golden, Rep. Rayfield) is scheduled for Senate Rules on [March 16](#) (1:00). LWVOR testimony submitted [here](#). This bill is identical to [HB 2678](#), (Rayfield, Campos, Senators Golden, Dembrow) and establishes ranked choice voting (RCV) as the method for selecting nonpartisan state offices, county and city offices (unless an adopted county charter provides otherwise) as well as major political parties' nominations for federal and state partisan offices.

[SB 343](#) (Senator Golden) will be heard in the Senate Rules committee on [March 16](#). LWVOR testimony submitted [here](#). This is a "local options" bill, allowing use of RCV in Oregon counties. It also requires the Secretary of State to create and staff the Elections Division to assist counties that adopt RCV in purchasing compatible computers, voting machines and vote tally systems.

Five other electoral systems bills are not yet scheduled for hearings ([HB 2678](#), [HB 2685](#), [HB 2686](#), [HB 3250](#), [HB 3241](#)). Three of these promote RCV: [HB 2678](#) as described above; [HB 2685](#) (launches RCV for overseas

and military ballots); and [HB 2686](#) (requires compatible vote tally systems and voting machines to accommodate RCV or other electoral systems allowed in Oregon)

[HB 3250](#) (Rep. Zach Hudson), permits counties, cities, districts and metropolitan service districts to adopt STAR voting as a voting method for local offices, but also establishes STAR voting for selecting winner of nomination for, and election to, state offices.

[HB 3241](#) (also sponsored by Rep. Hudson) establishes a task force on alternative voting methods: directing systematic examination (functions, advantages and disadvantages) of alternative voting systems and possible use in Oregon. It specifies systems to be examined, creates a sunset date for the task force on December 31, 2022, and stipulates that the bill take effect on the 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Regarding the voting systems behind these bills, see the information chart on STAR voting compared to RCV [here](#) on the LWVOR site.

Other Governance Issues (Chris Cobey)

Last month, Republican legislators again denied the majority Democrats the two-thirds quorum required by the Oregon Constitution for the House or Senate to conduct legislative business by failing to appear for a scheduled Senate session. They had engaged in similar absences in 2019 and 2020. Democratic legislators had employed the same tactics to the same end years earlier, when their party was in the minority.

In a possible response to the Republican legislators' latest no-show, the Democrats have scheduled a [Senate Rules Committee hearing at 1:00 pm this Thursday](#) on five measures designed to thwart this tactic by assessing various penalties on legislators whose absences for regularly scheduled floor sessions are unexcused. Three measures ([HB 2225](#), [SB 261](#), [SB 262](#)) would sanction such conduct by docking pay of and assessing fines on offending members, prohibiting the use of campaign

funds to pay expenses arising out of such absences, and expelling offending members from the Legislative Assembly with temporary ineligibility for re-election. Two other measures would submit ballot measures to the voters to amend the Oregon Constitution to expel lawmakers who are absent and unexcused for ten legislative sessions, and would make the offenders temporarily ineligible for re-election ([SJR 3](#)), and would lower the proportion of members needed for a quorum from the present two-thirds requirement to a majority of members ([SJR 4](#)).

Rights for Incarcerated Individuals (Marge Easley)

The League submitted testimony this past week in support of a second bill dealing with the restoration of voting rights for incarcerated individuals. The hearing for [HB 2366](#) was held March 9 in House Rules and included moving testimony from elected officials, voting rights advocates, former adults in custody, and also two individuals currently in custody at Oregon Correctional Facility. This bill is identical to [SB 571](#), heard by Senate Judiciary on February 24 and March 10.