

Elections Division • Tim Scott, Director

To: Chair Hoyle and Members of the House Rules Committee
From: Tim Scott, Director of Multnomah County Elections Division
Re: Support for HB 2177
Date: February 2nd, 2015

Multnomah County supports HB 2177

Voter registration was established to determine qualifications of individuals who wish to vote. Those qualifications are citizenship, Oregon residency and being at least seventeen years old. This step of the voting process is now unnecessary for DMV customers because DMV collects all of the qualification information at the time a record is created. HB 2177 is the next logical step in voter registration: taking the qualification information already collected at DMV and electronically transferring it to county election offices for a seamless voter registration process. If a DMV customer doesn't want to be registered they can opt out of voter registration by returning a postcard mailed to them for that purpose.

It is time to modernize voter registration

In 2010 Oregon created an online registration system tied to the DMV. Anyone with a DMV record and an electronic signature on file could use the system to create or update a voter registration record. County elections offices quickly learned that processing these online registrations took significantly less time than paper registrations. Paper voter registration forms are expensive to process. The forms must be cut down to a standard size, batched in groups for ease of processing and archiving, scanned into the voter registration system and duplicate checked against all other voter registration records to determine if the voter is already registered. The data is then manually entered into the registration system and then the data entry must be verified. Electronic registrations from the online registration system tied to DMV take significantly less time to process. Since there is no paper card and data entry is automated the registration clerks only need to run the duplicate check, verify that the address is correctly formatted and all data fields are complete.

Under HB 2177 the records collected at DMV would be transferred to county elections offices in the same way that online registrations are transferred. Paper registrations and change of address forms from DMV currently account for up to 59% of all paper registrations processed by Multnomah County Elections annually. The modernized system would reduce the cost of processing registrations and reduce the risk of data entry errors.

Upon implementation of HB 2177 approximately 300,000 DMV customers would be added to the voter rolls, Multnomah County's portion of those voters would be about 50,000. There would be some up front and ongoing costs to adding a significant number of voters to the rolls in Oregon, but this kind of registration surge happens every general election cycle. In the registration surge associated with the 2012 Presidential election Multnomah County added 50,000 voters to the rolls. The big difference though is with HB 2177 those registrations would come over electronically with significantly reduced processing time and cost.

HB 2177 creates a modern and efficient system of voter registration and reduces unnecessary barriers to voting. Multnomah County urges your support of HB 2177.

