



**Testimony of Ricardo Lujan-Valerio, Policy Associate
In Support of SB 861
Senate Committee on Rules
March 11, 2019**

Chair Burdick and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ supports SB 861, which would provide Oregonians with a postage-paid ballot for each election held in the state. As a nonpartisan organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, the ACLU of Oregon supports efforts that promote access to the ballot and protect the fundamental right to vote.

While some states are trying to make it harder to vote, Oregon has been a leader in honoring the right to vote by increasing access to the ballot. Most importantly, Oregon was the first state in the country to implement vote-by-mail for all elections. Since then, Oregon continues to lead efforts in voter accessibility through automatic voting registration.

To continue our commitment to voting rights and democratic elections, Oregon should pass SB 861. While some counties enjoy the accessibility of a nearby ballot drop box, the majority of rural Oregonians have to commute a significant distance to reach their drop box site. For people struggling to get by, working multiple jobs, and trying to put food on the table for their families, finding time and money to buy postage or travel to a ballot drop box can decrease these individuals' likelihood to vote.

Lastly, SB 861 would ensure that local and special elections will yield higher voting rates. A King County study in Washington has confirmed this for us. When Washingtonians were provided with pre-paid postage, local and special elections experienced a turnout increase as high as 10 percent.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 861. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonprofit organization with more than 43,000 members in the State of Oregon.