



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

April 16, 2019

To: [House Committee on Rules](#)  
Representative Paul Holvey, Chair

Re: **HB 2492** – Regarding prisoner counting for redistricting – **Support with comments**

The Oregon League conducted a study in 2007 on [Redistricting in Oregon](#), and after a consensus process among Oregon members, the study concluded with our [Redistricting Position](#). Furthermore, the League has a long tradition supporting improvements in the representation of citizens and in transparency in government.

HB 2492 is about “prisoner gerrymandering”. It would require that prisoners be counted, for the purposes of redistricting, in the communities where they are residents, rather than where they are imprisoned. This would uphold the principle of one-person-one-vote and would remedy distortions in representation caused by how Oregon currently counts prison populations during redistricting. The League also believes that HB 2492 would improve the representation of the prisoners themselves by the public officials and communities where they reside, rather than those where they are incarcerated.

There are three ideas that we think can be improved about this bill:

1. It only applies to data used by the legislature or the SoS, but not a possible independent commission. We suggest that “the Legislative Assembly or the Secretary of State” be replaced with something like “the entity that performs redistricting in Oregon”.
2. Congressional districts are not mentioned, but unless there is some legal reason for them being omitted, they are also important.
3. It uses the misnomers of “apportion” or “apportioning”. These terms were appropriate before the 1960s when the legislature apportioned districts to counties, but are now appropriate only for when Congress apportions the number of congressional seats to the various states after each census.

Since this proposal has been discussed since at least 2011, the League believes it is an idea whose time has come. We urge you to move a bill forward on this subject during this session, ahead of the highly political time of the next redistricting process in 2021.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

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