

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ELECTION

January 29, 1997 Hearing Room E

4 p.m. Tapes 3 - 4

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Lynn Snodgrass, Chair

Rep. Lee Beyer

Rep. Ken Messerle

Rep. Bob Montgomery

Rep. Kitty Piercy

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Rep. Peter Courtney

Rep. Bill Markham

STAFF PRESENT:

Brian Griffin, Administrator

Valerie Luhr, Administrative Support

Jennifer Peck, Committee Clerk

MEASURE/ISSUES HEARD:

Overview of the last Elections cycle

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

Tape/#	Speaker	Comments
TAPE 3, A		
004	Chair Snodgrass	Calls the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. Rep. Courtney and Rep. Markham are excused.
<u>OVERVIEW OF THE LAST ELECTIONS CYCLE</u>		

014	Phil Keisling	Secretary of State. Introduces Colleen Sealock. Presents an overview of the elections cycle beginning with the 1991 elections.
040	Keisling	<p>Focuses on the 1996 elections; 23 ballot measures compared to seven in a previous election. Voters' pamphlet was a record 376 pages in two volumes for the 1996 general elections--the largest pamphlet ever for Oregon.</p> <p>We had a series of special elections, and a recall of elections were some of the reasons for a more active 1996 election year.</p> <p>There were expenditure and contribution limitation impacts, and fiscal impacts for the year.</p> <p>General fund expenditure close to \$9 million.</p>
056	Keisling	<p>Focus on two things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Policy issues that came out of the 1996 experience. * Work on administrative issues. Is proud of the fairness of the Oregon Elections Division.
082	Keisling	Elections system in Oregon consists of the Secretary of State and the county elections offices. Tremendous amount of technical expertise. Offers help at any time to the committee. Uniform application of election laws.
097	Keisling	<p>Voter registration trends: Democratic and Republican parties are losing numbers of voters, while independent voters are 20% of the entire registered base at 400,000.</p> <p>Parties ought to let independents in. HB 2199 comes from Secretary of State's office. Estimates 400,000 to 500,000 Oregonians are not registered.</p> <p>In 1996, Oregon had its lowest turnout for presidential election. Seventy-one per cent of registered voters voted, thus close to one million eligible voters did not cast a ballot in the 1996 general election.</p>
141	Keisling	<p>There are four election days every year. Out of eight in a cycle, six are allowed to be vote by mail--more precise ballot delivery through the mail.</p> <p>An exemplary history of no fraud and no undue influence with a high turnout.</p> <p>A group formed by Secretary of State urged expansion of vote by mail. Even those opposed to vote by mail see its merits.</p>
		Believes it is nonsense to continue dual elections. HB 2200 is for

178	Keisling	vote by mail in all elections; refers to (EXHIBIT A) . State does not reimburse the counties for their elections costs.
209	Keisling	<p>Initiatives and ballot measures are increasing. The last time Oregon had more items on the ballot was in 1914.</p> <p>In 1980, there was not a single ballot measure that got on the ballot without paid signatures.</p> <p>In 1996, the 16 initiatives on the ballot were through paid signature gathering at two to four dollars per signature.</p> <p>In 1994, 16 individuals were convicted for signature fraud.</p> <p>Trend is toward initiatives that amend the constitution. Previously they were statutory changes.</p> <p>Open to creative solutions.</p>
284	Keisling	<p>Constitutionality of measures could be more monitored.</p> <p>Almost \$2 million was spent on voters' pamphlets in 1996.</p> <p>We have allowed unlimited arguments. Better system is one argument per side. Could save the state well over one million dollars.</p>
316	Keisling	Variety of other bills that change policy. The biggest issue is campaign financing.
363	Keisling	Level of complexity of election laws is increasing.
TAPE 4, A		
004	Chair Snodgrass	Opens to questions before technical discussion occurs.
010	Rep. Beyer	Asks for clarification of who pays for the elections.
014	Keisling	Counties pay for the elections.
015	Rep. Beyer	Thus it is an "unfunded mandate."
016	Keisling	Notes it was not affected by Ballot Measure 30.
018	Rep. Beyer	Asks about vote by mail security.
022	Keisling	Problems have arisen with people who change party affiliation or change their name; protocol in counties is to count only first ballot if duplicate is filed.
039	Rep. Beyer	Asks if a centralized system would save money.
		County should continue to do voter registration function; Secretary

041	Keisling	of State could help by doing the signature verification and linking information systems.
054	Rep. Beyer	Asks if vote by mail could shorten the window of time between sending out and receiving ballots. Questions the time it takes to know the outcome of elections and if it could be quicker.
060	Keisling	Yes, the window can be shortened to as little as two weeks. On the issue of accounting, there are reforms that can be made to count ballots more quickly. Secretary of State will work with counties to do that. Will not save money--still have dual system.
080	Rep. Piercy	Asks what guarantees we have to avoid undue influence.
087	Keisling	In six years the office has not received a formal complaint.
102	Rep. Piercy	Believes the Secretary of State should look at the issue of undue influence.
111	Keisling	Study he referred to was a high profile campaign.
120	Rep. Messerle	Variance of information in different elections offices in the type of information received and ways to get the information, namely the registration lists.
129	Keisling	Biggest frustration is when district variances run across county lines. System is better than it was; still a long way to go. Counties have different systems for keeping track of information. Discusses the best way to spend available funds to improve the system. Measure 47 adds to the counties' constraints. Ability to do services varies in the different counties.
167	Rep. Messerle	Questions the accuracy of addresses on the voter registration lists.
182	Keisling	Would like to follow up on that issue. Could affect other counties.
195	Chair Snodgrass	Referring to piece work, requests definition of paid signature gatherers.
202	Keisling	Defines the term. Contributions and expenditure reports require knowing who is paid.
214	Chair Snodgrass	Asks if one is considered a paid signature gatherer if they volunteer.
221	Keisling	Explains a person would not be.
225	Colleen Sealock	Director, Elections Division. Refers to statutes.
236	Chair Snodgrass	Percentage increases of 13 to 48 percent on vote-by-mail ballots.
242	Keisling	References graph A in (EXHIBIT A) .
259	Chair Snodgrass	Interested in actual percentages.

263	Keisling	Will provide the information.
265	Sealock	Explains the relationship between the Elections Division's and the two Rules and Elections committees. Gives her background in the field.
308	Sealock	The Elections Division is on call to everyone in the state: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Daily calls from citizens on elections issues. * Political candidates * Chief petitioners. Report filing * Voters' pamphlet publications
378	Sealock	Customer service is a goal. Federal Elections Commission of the United States refuses to answer citizen questions, but the state office does its best to answer any and all questions.
TAPE 3, B		
004	Sealock	Continues presentation. Will appear before the committee on a regular basis.
012	Chair Snodgrass	Asks for introductions.
	Sealock	Introduces Charles Stern, Yamhill County Clerk; Vicki Ervin, Multnomah County Elections Director; Scott Tighe, in charge of election operations; and Fred Neal, who implements ballot measure finances. Encourages members to speak with their county's elections officials. Lists subjects for which she can provide information.
052	Chair Snodgrass	Informs the committee they will approach their measures in block form. Asks if the 1996 elections cycle was cleaner or more mainstreamed than other elections.
061	Sealock	1996 provided innumerable challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * From the citizens' perspective and the two-volume pamphlet * Internally, number of candidates running for open office * The 1994 elections handled 358 candidate filings compared to 696 in 1996. * There were 71 initiative filings in 1994 and 85 filings in 1996.
105	Sealock	Electorate was clearer on elections.
113	Keisling	Candidates did a conscientious job of complying with complicated new rules. Citizens were upset by the federal races.
	Rep.	

149	Beyer	Requests comments on acceptable ballot titles for initiatives.
153	Sealock	Attorney General's office is required to draft the ballot title. Citizens' comments on the process are accepted and considered, and the office must respond to comments. Right to object to the ballot title. Ballot titles may be very influential.
190	Rep. Beyer	Chief petitioners may be good at name changing. Expresses concern of repeatedly putting an initiative up until an acceptable name is found.
190	Sealock	Does not deny that that occurs.
199	Rep. Beyer	Asks if the process may be simplified to consider all the changes.
203	Keisling	Very difficult and litigious process. Has not considered technical measure on this process.
222	Sealock	Comments on more clearly writing the 'yes' and 'no' statements on the ballots.
242	Chair Snodgrass	Invites Keisling and Sealock to come back to the committee the next week. Rep. Courtney arrives during the meeting.
258	Chair Snodgrass	Adjourns the meeting 5:14 p.m.

Submitted by, Reviewed by,

Valerie H. Luhr Brian Griffin,

Administrative Support Spec. Administrator

Transcribed by,

Jennifer Peck

Committee Clerk

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

A - Elections overview, written material, Phil Keisling, 3 pp.