



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director  
In Support of SB 683  
Senate Committee on Rules  
March 6, 2017**

Chair Burdick and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon<sup>1</sup> supports SB 683, which would require that the state pay for business reply mail for business reply mail postage for all ballots. 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. In 2014, 38 percent of ballots were returned by mail.

To continue our commitment to voting rights and democratic elections, Oregon should pass SB 683. We support this bill not only because it will increase voter turnout, but also because it will increase access for Oregonians with disabilities. Currently, an individual with a visual impairment who requests a special ballot must provide additional postage for their larger ballot.

We also support SB 683 because we know that postage can be a barrier to voting by mail, particularly for Oregonians living in poverty. Research shows that 42 percent of first-time voters – including those voters who registered via the DMV – don't have a postage stamp at home. Many of these voters, particularly those living in rural areas, don't live near a ballot drop box. 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.

Democracy is at its healthiest when everyone can vote without barriers. Requiring postage be paid on Oregon ballots ensures that no Oregonian has to worry about postage in order to vote.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 683.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonprofit organization with more than 28,000 members in the State of Oregon, and that number is growing as we speak.