



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 10, 2019

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

Re: [HB 3049](#) – Prohibits elections’ officials’ names from appearing on voting materials concurrently, both as candidate and overseeing incumbent official – **Comments**

The League of Women Voters scrupulously defends fair election practices. We do not have a specific position for or against election officials’ names appearing on voting materials simultaneously as incumbents and candidates so we did not speak to the related [SB 670](#). Yet we urge you to consider:


Name recognition advantage on voting materials:

- There is a recognized campaign advantage for incumbents. Name recognition and prominence can make fundraising easier. Government resources used in providing information related to duties of incumbents can boost name recognition.
- The “franking privilege”, sending correspondence to constituents using the authority of an official’s signature, is related to Latin for “francus”, meaning free. The [US Senate ended the franked mail privilege](#), in 1873, with government then still paying for the franking privilege by using stamps. Oregon legislators observe a blackout period for sending mail to constituents before elections, when they are competing as candidates. The presence of names on voting materials simultaneously, as both overseeing officials and as candidates, logically has a preferential impact.
- Oregon elections treat candidate names on voting materials very seriously. We list them in random order, with new random order lists issued for each election cycle. In Massachusetts, incumbents lead candidate lists, and are labeled as “incumbent”, although studies show election outcome advantages for both placing first on lists and “incumbent” labeling. The League assigns a random order to lists of candidates in our *Voters’ Guide* production. An advanced technology Student Mock Election model we examined randomly ordered candidate names for each student’s online ballot, having found that top-of-the-list candidate names could have as much as a 10% advantage. Prominence and name visibility advantages matter.

Previously submitted [testimony](#) calls for listing officials’ names in voting materials, for responsible and transparent elections. Credit for incumbency can be imparted within candidate statements. Voters can be directed reliably and consistently to the overseeing City Recorder, County Clerk, or Elections Director.

We note the testimony reference to “Fraudulent materials”, and “Some organizations attempt to make their own ‘voters’ pamphlets’ that creates voter confusion already”. For the record, the League of Women Voters of Oregon has worked closely with the state Elections Division and Secretary of State officials for many years to ensure that our *Voters’ Guides* are consistently nonpartisan, fair, and unmistakably labeled.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.


Norman Turrill
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[Congressional Franking Privilege: Background and Recent Legislation](#)

[Estimating Causal Effects of Ballot Order from a Randomized Natural Experiment: The California Alphabet Lottery, 1978-2002](#)

[Should Incumbents get top ballot billing?](#)

[Oregon New Member Guidebook](#), p. 8

[Oregon House Official Dates of Interest](#)

[Taxpayers continue to pay for franking privilege](#), Bend Bulletin, 2015.