



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**EVERY VOTER COUNTS! CAMPAIGN TO TURN IN LAST
OF 118,000 SIGNATURES
TO QUALIFY FOR NOVEMBER BALLOT**

WHAT: Every Voter Counts! Press Conference

WHERE: Salem State Capitol Press Room

WHEN: 11am, Thursday, July 3rd

The Every Voter Counts! Campaign (www.oneballot.com) announced today that it will turn in its final signatures to the Secretary of State to qualify its open primary initiative measure for the November ballot.

The open primary would replace the current closed, "party members only" system with one that gives every voter the same ballot, containing the names of all candidates running for office. Voters would then choose whomever they think is best. The top two vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation, would then advance to the general election ballot.

"Who's against democracy? If we have more participation in May, we'll have better choices in November, which means we might have a more reasonable and effective legislature," said Portland City Commissioner Randy Leonard, a Democrat.

"I'm convinced our primary system needs improvement, and the Every Voter Counts! measure provides an exciting opportunity for reform," said former State Representative Vic Backlund, of Keizer, a Republican.

A December 2007 statewide survey by Davis Hibbitts and Midghall found public support for the open primary reform at 66%. Every major demographic group, in all corners of Oregon, strongly supported the idea, including Democrats (68%), Republicans (62%) and "others" (74%).

"With these final 27,000 signatures we are confident that Oregonians will see the Every Voter Counts! proposal for an open primary on the November ballot," said former Secretary of State Phil Keisling, a Democrat and the measure's chief petitioner.

“We are setting the stage for a new era in Oregon politics,” said Keisling. “Oregonians don’t need and don’t want hyper-partisan fireworks. We want real solutions crafted by independent-minded lawmakers, regardless of anyone’s party affiliation, which can only be achieved by letting every voter have an equal say in every election, including the primary.”

“An open primary will give Oregon citizens a historic chance to change their election system and will allow more voters to have their say,” said former Secretary of State Norma Paulus, a Republican who is also leading the initiative effort.

Keisling and Paulus are among a long list of supporters from across political spectrum. Other supporters include former Governors Victor Atiyeh and John Kitzhaber; former State Treasurer Bill Rutherford; Congressman Earl Blumenauer, Portland City Commissioner Randy Leonard and former Commissioner Erik Sten; State Senators Frank Morse (R-Corvallis), Alan Bates (D-Ashland) and Ben Westlund (D-Bend); State Representatives Vicki Berger (R-Salem) and Ben Cannon (D-Portland) and dozens of other elected officials and legislators from both parties.

“Oregon once was a national leader in working across party lines to solve problems and create innovative policies,” said Paulus. “Our current primary system rewards loyalty to the extremes, and frankly, it discourages problem-solvers from even running for office,” she said.

Note to media: The signatures will be dropped off at the Secretary of State’s office in the Public Service Building in Salem at 10:45am.

Media are encouraged to attend the press conference. Those who are unable to attend, but who would like to interview Phil Keisling or Norma Paulus, should contact Chris Beck at (503)274-1517.