

COIN HB 3593 Electoral Fusion Worksheet for 2023

Bill Number: HB 3593 Electoral Fusion

Brief Description of Bill: Restores electoral fusion (fusion voting, open balloting) to Oregon by allowing voters to select preference by candidate and by party on the general election ballot; requires clerks to aggregate the result when a candidate is nominated by more than one party.

Name of Point Person who completed this form: Sal Peralta

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Last Updated: This is the first worksheet

1. Research topic – please highlight which category best fits your bill:

• Climate Energy Environment	• Education
• Housing/Houselessness	• Transportation
• Campaign Finance Reform (elections)	• Economics
• Immigration/Social Justice	• Crime/Criminal Justice
• Healthcare/Gun Safety	• Other: Right to privacy

2. The bill's Legislative champions – sponsors, co-sponsors: Chief sponsors: David Gomberg

Regular sponsors: The bill was just introduced in the last week. John Lively, Paul Evans, and a few others said they would co-sponsor before the hearing, which I was told would be scheduled in mid-April.

3. The bill's legislative opponents: GOP activists and some legislators, possibly other election reform groups.

4. What advocacy groups are supporting this bill and why are they supporting it? We have just started the work. Center for Ballot Freedom is a non-profit that is promoting the work nationally. Here in Oregon it is the Working Families Party, Independent Party of Oregon, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 555 so far, but we have only been back at this for a few months.

This legislation is a reform that strengthens multiparty democracy by restoring the rights of political parties to work collaboratively with one another by nominating the same candidate and the rights of voters to express their preference for both the candidate and party platform they prefer on the ballot.

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Unions, farmers, and minority voters have a long history of using electoral fusion to build winning electoral coalitions in the United States. Electoral fusion has historically been supported among communities that are marginalized, either within the broader society or within an electoral coalition, because it allows for those groups to demonstrate support for their platform.

It is good for candidates, since it allows them to build a broader coalition. It is good for voters because it allows their vote to better express their values on the general election ballot.

Although electoral fusion is still practiced in New York and Connecticut, it was eliminated in most of the country to preserve one party rule in different regions.

I strongly urge folks who want to understand how this has worked historically, to [watch this two minute video by North Carolina's cultural resources director, Rebecca Umfleet](#), which describes how electoral fusion was used and why it was eliminated by Democrats in the south. It was eliminated around the same time in Oregon, as part of Republican efforts to deprecate the voting rights of immigrants and workers.

Understanding how that past shapes our present is a key to understanding the dysfunction of our government. We don't have a two party system in our country. We have two one party systems. Part of the reason for that is that around 100 years ago, at a time when some Americans felt very comfortable intruding on the rights of others, the two biggest parties passed reforms that restricted the ability of smaller parties to work together to build alternative governing coalitions.

The net result is that today we have a political system that is only competitive in roughly 10 percent of legislative districts. This rewards both big money donors and political extremism.

It rewards big money donors because it allows them to concentrate their financial resources on just a handful of competitive legislative districts. If they had to spend those resources across more districts, their ability to control elections with campaign spending would be less.

It rewards extremism because it allows major party candidates to control most of the legislative maps in primary elections that only involve their members.

In most of the country, 90% or more, there is little need to moderate beyond the values of one's own party. In polarizing times such as these, when the members of the two parties are motivated more by negative animus against the other party, it creates the doom loop cycle we are caught in today, in which collaboration and compromise are seen as betrayals.

Such times reward conservatism and authoritarianism, not those seeking to expand human rights and economic opportunity at the expense of concentrated wealth and authority.

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5. What groups are opposing this bill and why are they opposing it? Oregon Association of County Clerks. They oppose any legislation related to elections on implementation grounds. The Republicans will oppose, as will some Democrats who do not see the benefit of collaborating with third parties or encouraging reforms that promote multi-party democracy.

6. What is the likelihood that the bill will pass? Slim. I don't think we have the votes and we have not had the time to work on leadership beyond getting them to agree to hear the bill. Our goal is to get people to understand the reform and to start building a coalition in 2023 to try to pass it in 2024. I hope COIN will be part of that coalition.

7. What is your recommendation regarding whether COIN should take a position on this bill?
Support

You may want to consider the following criteria but are not required to do so:

- a. **Does COIN or other progressive groups across the state care strongly about this issue?** Yes. And the more people learn about it, the more groups will care.
- b. **Does this bill protect or expand the rights of marginalized populations?** Yes. Please google "wilmington electoral fusion".
- c. **Does this bill help change the rules and structures of the democratic system to make it work better?** Yes. It restores the concept of collaboration in our system of elections and empowers third parties. I see it as an incremental step towards building a stronger multiparty democracy.
- d. **Is this an issue area that is entirely controlled by the states or an issue over which states have a great deal of power?** Yes. Individual states control their own system of elections, subject to (decreasing) federal protections.
- e. **Is this fight winnable?** Yes. Over time. I have been working on campaign finance reform for more than 20 years and I have won battles on the path to this election reform before.
- f. **Would constituent power add value and make a difference?** Yes.
- g. **Other considerations?** The coalition we are building is necessary to counter extremism in CD5 and CD6.

8. List the relevant dates concerning the bill(s). (scheduled committee hearings, votes, lobby days, other scheduled advocacy, phone banks, post card parties, etc.) See answer to No. 3 above.

Hearing promised for mid-April.

9. What activities does the advocacy group wish to mobilize COIN members or other activists to engage in? (phone calling, post cards, emails, LTEs, lobby days, other?)

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Maybe let me present the issue to the group? Submit testimony on behalf of the legislation. Send an email to members to help educate them on the issue and possibly include it in a testimony ask to members to weigh in when it is scheduled for a hearing?

10. Are there any media contacts?

Sal Peralta 503.437.2833

11. Is there any other important information about your bill?

- [Fusion ballot FAQ](#)
- [Voters Coalitions and Policy Debates](#), Roger Senserrick Working Families Party
- [The two party system is killing our democracy](#), Lee Drutman
- [American Society cannot survive unless the far right is marginalized](#), Lee Drutman