

## Legislature endorses Oregon's move to national popular vote

Bill to join other states in ignoring Electoral College goes to governor

By Aubrey Wieber  
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon is on its way to joining a movement to ignore the Electoral College in favor of the popular vote in presidential elections.

Senate Bill 870 passed the House 37-22 on June 5 after passing the Senate nearly two months ago. The bill joins Oregon in a group of 15 states supporting the effort to have the popular vote reflected in ballots cast in the Electoral College. The bill now goes to Gov. Kate Brown, who has supported the popular vote since her time as secretary of state. She will sign it, a spokeswoman said.

With Oregon, the states would control 196 electoral votes. The compact would only go into effect if enough states joined to reach the 270 electoral college votes needed to decide an election.

Another eight states have passed national popular vote bills through at least one

legislative chamber. If all eight states passed it, that would add another 75 votes, according to the movement's website. That would be one more electoral vote than needed.

Opponents of the popular vote movement say the current system has worked well for more than 200 years and ensures rural parts of the country aren't ignored in deciding the president. But the Electoral College has become a target recently. Donald Trump and George W. Bush were elected without winning the popular vote. Bush lost the popular vote by more than a half-million votes while winning enough electoral votes to take the election. That hadn't happened since the late 1800s.

The bill was carried on the floor by Rep. Tiffany Mitchell, D-North Coast. She said she first voted in a presidential election in 2004 as a Utah Democrat, knowing her vote wouldn't matter.

"It is truly disenfranchising to know that your vote won't mean anything on a national stage," she said.

Moving to the popular vote, Mitchell said, would give presidential candidates

a reason to visit more than just battleground states. It would ensure everyone's vote counted equally, and it would help fight voter fraud because those looking to influence elections could no longer focus their attention on purple states.

Debate in the House grew spirited.

Democrats used the individual liberty argument — something usually brought up by Republicans — while Republicans said the plan was a knee-jerk reaction. They said it also violates the will of Oregon voters: If Oregon voters support a candidate that doesn't get the majority of the nation's vote, the state's electoral votes would still back the popular vote winner rather than the candidate who won the state.

Ideology aside, the deal is dependent on enough states joining the compact, which Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer, said was laughable.

"It's a neat thing right now to talk about, but soon it will wither away and be forgotten about," Post said.

In the end, it passed on party line.

"Today, we make Oregon a battleground state," Mitchell said.

## More resources requested for predicted above-average fire season

By Aubrey Wieber  
Oregon Capital Bureau

Last week marked the official start of Oregon's wildfire season, but without new resources the state is only incrementally more prepared to combat fire this summer than in past years. State Rep. Pam Marsh, R-Ashland, said that's why Gov. Kate Brown's proposed budget "set off" her constituents. It included resources to staff a wildfire council, which Brown created through executive action this winter, but that council won't have any impact until the fall at the earliest. Then, funding would still need to be acquired to carry out recommendations.

Brown proposed no additional funding to bolster the state's response to this summer's fires.

Despite a strong snowpack, a state analysis predicts another above-average fire season. It's what's referred to as "the new normal."

That's why Marsh is working to get \$6.8 million for wildfire mitigation and suppression before the 2019 legislative session ends. The package would give the Oregon Department of



Contributed photo/Oregon Department of Forestry

**A firefighter uses a chainsaw. Lawmakers are calling for more resources as Oregon heads into another fire season analysts say will again be above average.**

Forestry more resources to fight fire, help communities implement smoke shelters to shield vulnerable people when heavy smoke billows into town and provide more resources to the front lines to stop fires from growing.

It's a stopgap measure, Marsh said, but a much needed one. Marsh supports Brown's fire council, which she hopes will push the state to a more proactive approach that includes better land management, prescribed burns and more resources.

"We are coming into this session having just experienced the two most expensive fire seasons in our state's history," Marsh said. Last summer's season cost \$514 million.

Marsh is hoping to get the money in June through agency budgets rather than a bill.

She has wide support, but she's lacking an endorsement from Brown. Brown has signaled to lawmakers that she wants the council to come up with recommendations first, then get money.

## Oregon closer to making Daylight Saving Time permanent

By Mark Miller  
Oregon Capital Bureau

A proposal to put Oregon on year-round Daylight Saving Time passed the House Thursday, and now the only hurdles to the change are outside the state.

Senate Bill 320, which passed 37-20, now goes to Gov. Kate Brown. But the shift away from twice-yearly changing of the clocks will only really happen if California passes similar legislation and Congress gets involved.

Washington has already done so, and Gov. Jay Inslee has signed the change into law.

The California Assembly last month passed a bill to place the country's most populous state on daylight time, but the state Senate has yet to take it up.

If California joins Oregon and Washington, Congress still must vote to let the three states abandon Pacific Standard Time. Several West Coast lawmakers, including Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, support the move.

The House vote on

Thursday was somewhat closer than in the Senate, with several representatives opposing year-round daylight time.

Rep. Jack Zika, R-Redmond, is concerned about the sun rising an hour later in the winter, already the darkest time of the year. He lives close to where his young children go to school, and he doesn't like the idea of them going to school in the dark more than they already do.

"Don't make my kids walk to school in the dark," Zika said.

Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer, one of SB 320's sponsors, pointed to a chart that shows when the sun would rise and set on Nov. 20, Dec. 20, Jan. 20 and Feb. 20 if Oregon ditched standard time. The latest sunrises would be in western Oregon, around 9 a.m., while in central and Eastern Oregon, they'll be closer to 8:30 a.m.

Oregon already observes daylight time for a majority of the year, from March to November, Post noted.

"I really think we're talking about a small period of time here, not a large

change," he said after the vote, adding, "I'm not trying to discount those fears, but I think they're a little over-the-top."

Post said he's been hearing for years from constituents who are tired of "springing forward" and "falling back" every year.

"People like the longer afternoons and evenings," Post said, gesturing to the natural light coming in through his office window.

Gov. Kate Brown has declared her support for making Daylight Saving Time permanent. She said Thursday she plans to sign SB 320 into law.

Malheur County, the only county on Mountain Time, would not have to follow the new clock rules and instead keep its clocks in sync with neighboring Idaho.

If federal approval is obtained this year and California passes its own bill, this November would likely be the last time Oregonians have to set their clocks back one hour. Next March, when the West Coast states go on daylight time, there would be no falling back.

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