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Explanatory Statement – Initiative 109/ Ballot Measure 65
BILL BRADBOURN
SECRETARY OF THE STATE

Explanatory Statement:

Measure 65 would change Oregon's elections system for: United States Senator, Representative in Congress, Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Attorney General, state Senator, state Representative, and for any other state, county, city, or district office, except for nonpartisan offices or offices for which current law expressly authorizes nominations by political parties.

Rather than an election in which certain parties and voters choose party nominees for the November general election, the May primary would become a single contest among all candidates, regardless of party or independent status, in which all voters, regardless of party or independent status, may vote. The November election would become a run-off between the top two finishers from the May election, regardless of their party or independent status. The new primary would become the only means for candidates to reach the general election ballot. Parties and nonaffiliated voters would no longer be able to nominate candidates to the general election ballot by other means.

Under Measure 65, the primary election would be open to all eligible candidates. All run together on the same primary ballot. All voters would receive that ballot, and may vote for any one candidate per office. Only the top two vote getters from the primary would appear on the general election ballot. The two candidates who advance to the November general election might be from the same political party, different parties, or no party at all.

Measure 65 requires that the ballot identify the political party that candidates have selected on their voter registration. For candidates not affiliated with a party, the ballot would state either "Registration: not a member of a party" or be silent, as the candidate chooses. The ballot would also state that party registration does not imply party endorsement.

Measure 65 requires that the ballot list any endorsements by a major or minor political party that have been accepted by the candidate. Candidates may be endorsed by more than one party, and parties may endorse more than one candidate. Endorsements may change between the primary and general election.

Under current law, candidates are nominated to the November general election ballot in several ways. Major political parties choose their nominees in the primary elections. These elections are open only to voters and candidates registered in that party. Major parties may allow nonaffiliated voters to participate in the primary. Historically, sometimes they have, and sometimes they have not.

Under current law, minor political parties choose their nominees not in primary elections, but according to party rules approved by the Secretary of State. Candidates not affiliated with any party qualify for the general election ballot by gathering signatures or holding a convention.

Under current law, nominees of major and minor political parties, and nonaffiliated candidates nominated independent of the parties, all appear on the general election ballot.

Measure 65 has provisions that would substitute the next finisher if a primary election qualifier drops out of the general election and provides for filling vacancies in office, regardless of party or independent status.

We the undersigned submit the text under “Explanatory Statement” according to ORS 251.215(3):

Phil Keisling

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