

Rep. Salinas – Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act
Committee on House Administration – Member Day remarks

Thank you, Chairman Steil [style] and Ranking Member Morelle [more-elli]. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the Committee on House Administration today about my bill, the *Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act*.

The *Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act* will ensure that every eligible voter in America is able to cast a safe, secure, and accessible ballot—by mail—in our federal elections. That includes folks who can't make it to the polls due to age, illness, disability, or simply because they work two or three jobs and don't have the time.

My state of Oregon has been a vote-by-mail state for almost 30 years. We have consistently high levels of voter turnout. Research has shown that voters from both sides of the aisle vote by mail at similar rates, so this bill would not favor one party over the other—it would benefit all Americans.

This includes our brave and hardworking first responders who do an indispensable job. Their jobs are dangerous, and they are difficult. Beyond the taxing physical work, the jobs also require intensive work hours that extend beyond a normal work day.

The amount of work they do cuts into weekends, public holidays, and yes, even Election Day. Given these circumstances, it is essential that first responders—and

all voters in similar situations—are provided the ability to participate in our democracy.

In addition to allowing every eligible voter to easily and efficiently participate in our elections, voting-by-mail saves a significant amount of money. Officials in my state have reported that voting-by-mail decreased costs by at least one-third, which is around \$3 million each year.

On top of those savings, voting-by-mail benefits the economy by improving productivity and decreasing lost wages because Americans can vote from their kitchen table instead of waiting in lines that snake around the block. A report from 2012 found that the amount of time Americans spent waiting in line to vote cost over \$540 million in lost productivity and wages.

The benefits of my bill don't end there—it also includes a requirement that states must provide voters with an opportunity to cure their ballots. This is critical because voters casting their ballots by mail may be more likely to make errors due to a lack of access to an election official to assist them.

The *Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act* would extend the access that Oregonians have had for decades to every American. It would establish a national right to vote by mail, which would only strengthen our democracy by allowing more Americans to make their voices heard.

That's why the *Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act* is also an integral part of the *Freedom to Vote Act*.

I encourage this Committee to give full and fair consideration to the *Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act*—and to oppose any efforts that may arise to restrict access to the ballot, including any efforts to restrict the ability of Americans to vote by mail.

Thank you for your time.