



# WHO'S WHO? in Oregon Politics

Civic participation means getting everyday folks involved in the decisions that affect our families and communities. There are many ways we can all get involved in the process, regardless of our citizenship status.

Oregon families who experience hunger know what it's like to make the tough, daily decision between food and other basic necessities. Our housing, childcare, medical and transportation costs are all increasing while our wages remain stagnant, and we are forced to make difficult decisions about where to make cuts in already too tight budgets. Oregonians experiencing hunger also know that elected leaders can make a remarkable difference in our daily lives.

**“Our families count, and our voices matter!”**

**Hunger is a problem we can solve — together.**

Elected leaders have the power to pass policies, create and fund programs, and listen to our communities when coming up with solutions. When we participate in elections or tell elected leaders what we need, we can make a difference for our families.

## HOW TO VOTE IN OREGON



Oregon is a vote by mail state. A ballot will be mailed to all registered voters.



**1** Once you fill in your ballot, place it in the secrecy envelope, seal it, and put it in the return envelope.



**2** Make sure to sign the return envelope after verifying your name and current address are correct.



**3** Place stamp on the envelope and mail it back.



If it's the Thursday or later prior to Election Day, you'll need to drop off your ballot at an official ballot site.

All ballots must be received by 8:00 pm on Election Day in order to be counted.

## FEDERAL ELECTED POSITIONS

### POSITION




#### US PRESIDENT

Heads the executive branch of the federal government. Serves for four years, with a two term (eight years) maximum.

### KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Nominates the heads of all executive departments and federal agencies, including Department of Health and Human Services.
- Proposes the federal budget for approval by Congress.
- Has the power to veto (reject) bills passed by Congress; Congress can overturn a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.
- Serves as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.
- Appoints federal judges and nominates Supreme Court Judges.

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

-  The president can make rules about who is eligible for federal nutrition programs like SNAP and WIC.
-  Recommends funding levels for programs such as childcare, housing, hunger, and healthcare.
-  Nominates lifetime appointment of federal judges who rule on issues like equal rights and non-discrimination.

**US Congress** • Congress is made up of two separate bodies: the US House of Representatives and the US Senate. Together they form the legislative (law making) branch of the federal government. There are no limits on the number of terms that a member of Congress can serve.



#### US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

There are 435 members of the US House of Representatives. All seats in the House are up for election every two years. The number of representatives from each state is based on population. Currently, Oregon has 5 representatives.

#### SENATE

There are 100 members of the Senate, each serving a six year term. Each state elects two senators. Senate races are staggered so that only one third of senators are up for election at a time.









- Makes and passes federal laws.
- Decides amount of money that will be spent on federal programs in yearly budget.
- Determines federal tax guidelines.
- Can propose changes to Constitution.
- Power to declare war.
- **Senate only:** Approves President's appointments to positions like US Supreme Court and all federal courts, and the Cabinet (including Housing Secretary and Health and Human Service Secretary).

-  Decides whether to expand or cut funding for programs such as SNAP, school meals, Head Start, Oregon Health Plan, Social Security, and domestic violence services.
-  Creates laws governing child nutrition, immigration, healthcare, education, criminal justice, student loan interest rates, and tax rates for low income families.





## OR STATEWIDE ELECTED POSITIONS

POSITION	KEY RESPONSIBILITIES	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU
<p><b>GOVERNOR</b></p> <p>Heads the state executive branch. Elected every four years and cannot serve more than two consecutive terms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposes the state’s annual budget for approval by the legislature.</li> <li>Power to veto bills passed by state legislature. A veto can prevent a bill from becoming a law.</li> <li>Appoints positions to boards and commissions that determine how to enforce laws and spend money.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Recommends funding levels for programs such as public schools, roads, housing and child welfare programs.</li> <li> Can veto legislation and ensures existing laws are being executed properly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ATTORNEY GENERAL</b></p> <p>Heads the state’s chief legal and law enforcement office. Elected every four years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enforces health, safety, and consumer regulations.</li> <li>Represents the state in legal matters.</li> <li>Collects court-ordered child support.</li> <li>Supports statewide crime victim service programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Represents the state’s position in all legal matters in court, including housing discrimination and racial profiling.</li> <li> Issues opinions and interpretation of Oregon law or proposed laws, including voting rights, immigration, and healthcare implementation.</li> <li> Helps ensure that orders of protection in domestic violence cases are enforced across the state.</li> <li> Approves ballot measure titles and descriptions; confusing or unclear titles can mislead voters.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SECRETARY OF STATE</b></p> <p>Oregon’s chief elections officer. First in the line of succession for Governor. Elected every four years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps ensure the right to participate in federal, state, and local elections.</li> <li>Serves as the state’s auditor, ensuring public money is used appropriately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Helps ensure that no Oregonian is unfairly denied the right to vote.</li> <li> Ensures that money for important state programs like welfare, foster care, and housing programs are being spent well and makes suggestions for improvements.</li> </ul>

**Oregon State Legislature** • The Oregon legislature is divided into two houses: the Oregon State Senate and the Oregon State House of Representatives. During odd years, Oregon legislators meet for 160 days, and meet for 35 days during even years.

### OR STATE SENATORS

The state is divided into 30 state senate districts and each district elects one senator. State Senate seats are up for election every four years.

### OR STATE REPRESENTATIVES

There are 60 State House Districts. Each district elects one representative. All State House seats are up for election every two years.

- Enacts state laws in areas such as state taxes, education, child care and conservation of natural resources.
- Shares budget-making responsibilities with the Governor.

-  Makes decisions about funding priorities, such as Oregon public schools, roads, housing and foster care.
-  Can make policy and budgetary decisions about access and robustness of social service programs like welfare, healthcare, and childcare.
-  Can expand healthcare access for communities facing barriers due to immigration status or income.
-  Can change planning regulations to ensure development of low and moderate income housing.



## CAN I VOTE?

You must be a US citizen and at least 18 years of age at the time of the election. Oregon's expanded Motor Voter Law makes voter registration automatic when an eligible, unregistered voter visits the DMV to apply for, renew, or replace an Oregon driver's license, ID card, or permit.

If you have a past felony conviction, you may re-register after release from prison, and people on parole and probation can vote. Not sure if you're registered? Check at: [sos.oregon.gov](http://sos.oregon.gov).

### Regardless of your voting status, you can still make a difference!

- Encourage and educate people who can vote.
- Share this guide at your church or with your neighbors.
- Write letters to your local paper about issues you care about.

## LOCAL ELECTED POSITIONS

### POSITION

### KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Positions in local government may be elected by voters in a specific district or city/county wide. City governments in Oregon have different structures; in some the mayor is the most powerful and in others the city council has more power. Learn more about your city government structure to cast your vote.

### CITY MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Elected officials who lead city government. Serve a four-year term.

- Determines policies for all city services and sets the budget for a city.



Can provide financial support to community services which support low income families.



Make zoning and budgetary decisions that could promote or prevent development of affordable and temporary housing, such as emergency homeless shelters for mothers and children.



Can introduce a new tax or fee for a council vote.

### COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Elected officials who lead county government. Each commission has between three and five members.

- Determines policies for all services provided by county agencies.
- Provides community services like county health departments, public transportation, public housing and libraries.

Same as above.

The **OREGON FOOD BANK** works to eliminate hunger in Oregon by addressing the root causes of hunger through public policy, nutrition and garden education, and public awareness.

**FORWARD TOGETHER** unites grassroots leaders to win rights, recognition and resources for all families.



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