



Written by [James Murphy](#) on February 2, 2024

Oregon Supreme Court Upholds Law Barring 10 Senators From Running for Reelection

On Thursday, the Oregon Supreme Court upheld a new Oregon law that effectively bars nine Republican state senators, along with one Independent, from running for reelection. Passed by voters in 2022, a new law known as [Measure 113](#) prohibits lawmakers in the Beaver State from standing for reelection if they have missed 10 or more legislative floor sessions without permission or excuse.

The law was meant to discourage “denial of quorum” attacks, which legislators in Oregon have used to delay votes on certain controversial issues. For example, a denial of quorum was used in March of last year as a means of delaying votes on expanding abortion access, strict gun-control measures, and allowing children to have sex-change surgeries.

Oregon’s secretary of state, LaVonne Griffin-Valade, announced she would invoke the law last August in response to the largely GOP walkout.

Two GOP state senators, Daniel Bonham and Kim Thatcher, [explained](#) their walkout in the *Washington Examiner* in March.

“Our decision to deny quorum now is the result of two immoral bills pushed by Democrats,” Bonham and Thatcher wrote:

The first, House Bill 2002, would allow a child of any age to be able to have an abortion without parental knowledge. It would also allow minors to have irreversible sex-change treatments and procedures without their parent’s knowledge. The second, House Bill 2395, would create government-sanctioned secrecy between parents and their children, thereby driving a wedge between the family unit by removing parental consent for children to have substance abuse treatment and mental health services, when parents should be informed of all medical and health services their children need.

[HB 2002](#) was passed and signed by Governor Tina Kotek in July. [HB 2395](#) was signed by Kotek in August.

The now-disqualified senators challenged the law in court, arguing that the wording of the new law, which states that 10 or more unexcused absences “shall disqualify the member from holding office as a Senator or Representative for the term following the election after the member’s current term is completed,” actually means that the disqualifications should not occur until 2028, since the 2024



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election will be held before the current term ends.

The court admitted that the GOP senators had a point about the law's wording, but ruled that the voters' intent was clear enough.

"If we were required to choose between petitioners' and the secretary's interpretations based on the text alone, petitioners would have a strong argument that their reading is the better one," the court's opinion stated. "But we do not review the text in a void. We instead seek to understand how voters would have understood the text in the light of the other materials that accompanied it. And those other materials expressly and uniformly informed voters that the amendment would apply to a legislator's immediate next terms of office, indicating that the voters so understood and intended that meaning."

Griffin-Valade said that discerning the will of the voters was her intention all along:

I've said from the beginning my intention was to support the will of the voters. It was clear to me that voters intended for legislators with a certain number of absences in a legislative session to be immediately disqualified from seeking reelection.

The disqualification affects six senators for the 2024 election. Four others will be disqualified in 2026.

GOP Senate leader and current Senator Tim Knopp will be among those disqualified to run this year, and he worries that the law will stifle dissent in Oregon.

"We obviously disagree with the Supreme Court's ruling. But more importantly, we are deeply disturbed by the chilling impact this decision will have to crush dissent," Knopp told Portland's KGW.

According to Knopp, no appeal is forthcoming, and, despite the outcome, he feels that most of the senators would walk out again if necessary.

"We think it was a victory on principle and most of our members if you talk to them say they would do it again, I think they all would, quite frankly," he concluded.

If ever there was an issue emblematic of the Greater Idaho movement — a group looking to move some of Oregon's eastern counties to neighboring Idaho — this one is it. Oregon's state politics are tilted so far to the left that the state's GOP deems it necessary to deny quorum in order to be listened to at all. Now, even that action has been denied to them by the far-left West Coast of the state.



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