

Statement of Opponecy for the The Informed Voting (SB: ORU-008)

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Overview

Senator Foor’s “Informed Voting Act” seeks to strengthen Oklahoma’s democratic process by eliminating party-line voting on all state and local ballots. Under current practice, a voter can simply select one party label, resulting in automatically casting votes for every candidate of that party. SB ORU-008 removes this option, requiring voters to select each candidate or measure individually. The bill tasks the State Election Board with implementing procedures that maintain compliance with all federal election laws.

At its core, this bill aims to promote more intentional, issue-based voter decision-making and reduce the influence of blanket partisan voting behaviors. By having voters mark each candidate one by one, the author hopes to encourage a more informed electorate and stronger accountability for those running for office.

Pros and Needs

This bill supports a more thoughtful voting process by encouraging voters to fully engage with the ballot rather than relying on a single-click party endorsement. Research consistently shows that down-ballot races such as local judgeships, municipal offices, and school boards are often decided by extremely small margins and are most impacted by straight-party voting. SB ORU-008 ensures that voters must intentionally choose each candidate, creating a more educated and deliberate electorate.

The bill also addresses a real need in Oklahoma’s political climate: widespread voter disengagement and limited understanding of local offices. By eliminating straight-party voting, voters are nudged to read candidate names, recognize positions, and make more informed

evaluations. This can lead to stronger representation and reduce the chances of unqualified candidates winning solely because of partisan loyalty rather than merit.

Furthermore, the bill aligns Oklahoma with several other states that have ended straight-ticket voting to increase voter autonomy. It does not prevent anyone from voting for all candidates of one party it simply removes the shortcut and encourages personal agency. This Act does not infringe on voter rights; rather, it promotes clarity, education, and thoughtful participation.

Moving the Body

The key challenge in passing this legislation is addressing misconceptions about voter inconvenience. Many legislators initially view party-line voting as a harmless option that saves time, without considering its effects on voter engagement and accountability. As a lobbyist, the major focus is reframing the issue: this is not about making voting harder it is about making representation better.

Humanizing the issue becomes essential. Many voters admit they do not know who their local candidates are, yet those same offices determine school policies, local taxes, law enforcement oversight, and community planning. Legislators respond strongly when reminded that democracy functions best when citizens genuinely know who they are electing. Bringing stories of uninformed voting, communities affected by poorly understood races, and examples where down-ballot offices drastically shape people's daily lives helps the body understand why this bill matters.

Ultimately, moving this bill requires emphasizing the long-term health of Oklahoma's democracy. Senator Foor's legislation prioritizes informed choice, transparency, and voter empowerment values that appeal across party lines. SB ORU-008 is not an attack on political affiliation; it is an investment in better elections and a more accountable government.