

Ballot Measure #1

Jackson County Commissioners to be Non-Partisan

Change the position of Jackson County commissioner from partisan to non-partisan.

Commissioner is the only elected Jackson County position that is partisan. Only registered Democrats and Republicans can vote for commissioner in May and the two candidates chosen by the major parties advance to the November election. In Jackson County, almost 44% of registered voters, our largest voting bloc, are locked out of the primary round because they are non-affiliated or registered with minor parties. Voting YES for Measure 15-224 means that ALL registered voters will get to vote or run for commissioner under the same rules. This is the fundamentally fair system we have long used to select the sheriff, district attorney, clerk, assessor, surveyor, and judges. City councilors, mayors, school board members, and other board positions are all nonpartisan.

Twenty-nine of Oregon's thirty-six counties have made their commissioner positions nonpartisan, including all adjoining counties: Josephine, Klamath, and Douglas. Partisan politics divide, rather than unite, the electorate and reduce the effectiveness of the Board of Commissioners to address county issues. Issues like having an adequate jail or animal shelter are not partisan issues.

In a nonpartisan election, all eligible candidates appear on the ballot with no political affiliation. The top two vote-getters in the primary will have a run-off in the November election. If a candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, at least 50% plus one vote, they are automatically elected to the position.

Vote Yes on Measure 15-224 to allow all voters to have a voice!

Ballot Measure #2

Increase the Number of Jackson County Commissioners

Jackson County's three-member governing body was established in 1853 when the census counted 1,506 residents. Our county has grown to almost a quarter million people. Three commissioners cannot adequately serve, or represent, a county of our size. With only three commissioners, two make a quorum. Just two people can set policy for a quarter million residents! It is time to add two commissioners to the Board of Commissioners to reflect our growing county. All five will be elected at large. This Measure does not establish districts.

All Oregon counties have either three or five commissioners. As counties grow, they increase the number of commissioners, like when schools increase enrollment they add teachers.

Adding two commissioners will not lead to bigger government. We already have "big government." Five commissioners will be better supervisors of the sprawling county bureaucracy, and provide more accountability. Having five commissioners will not be costly when voters select responsible representatives to make sensible choices. Those who argue there may be material costs are deploying speculative budgets with unsupported and unexplained numbers.

Municipalities, school districts, corporations, and most other boards have at least five (and often more) board members, making them more effective. They have more input with greater perspective, leading to better decision-making and more transparency. Increasing to five will make it easier for you to connect with a commissioner.

Vote Yes on Measure 15-225 to add two commissioners, providing greater representation for our growing county!

Ballot Measure #3

Decrease the Salaries of Jackson County Commissioners

For years, Jackson County Commissioners have given themselves the highest pay in Oregon. Two make \$143,416 (\$45,000 more than the Governor). With passage of Measures 15-225 and 15-226, commissioner salaries will be reduced to \$75,000 and they will no longer set their own salaries. Five commissioners will receive equal pay, still nearly double the median salary of their constituents. Future increases will be indexed to average wages in Jackson County. Whether newly elected or incumbent, commissioners have identical responsibilities. Presently, commissioners can claim six automatic “seniority” raises so long as they avoid getting recalled. Taxpayers should not need to entice them with raises to serve out their terms.

Commissioners increase their salary scale yearly to match national inflation rates, not the rate increase (if there is one) for Jackson County workers. The combination of seniority boosts and Cost of Living Adjustments can increase salaries by over 20% in just two years. This happened in 2021-2023.

Some opponents suggest that, despite paying the same fair salary with Measure 15-226, there will be material costs to add two commissioners. Speculative budgets supporting these arguments are riddled with errors and unsupported numbers, but even if valid, these arguable costs represent less than 1/4000th of the probable 2027 budget.

Measure 15-226 adjusts salaries to a reasonable level reflecting the true nature of a commissioner's duties, while still making this job attainable and attractive for those who wish to serve their community. Commissioners are not hands-on managers. They should be representatives and policy-makers, who get out and respond to the concerns and needs of All of Us in Jackson County. We have the option to allow the old, bureaucratic system to inflate commissioners' salaries or make a change. How?

Vote Yes on Measure 15-226!