

LES AUCOIN  
1ST DISTRICT, OREGON



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

April 1, 1981

A WESTERN SOLUTION TO A NATIONAL PROBLEM

Dear Colleague:

In response to a practice that adversely affects voters in all western states, we have drafted a pragmatic, practical and non-intrusive solution to the problem caused by early release of Presidential election results.

A recent CBS News-New York Times poll showed that many registered voters who did not vote in the west were discouraged by early projections or had heard President Carter's early concession. Several bills have been introduced on this subject: we think we've found a better solution.

We do not want to change election day to Sunday or declare it a national holiday. Elections should not compete with religious or recreational activities and the cost of shutting down businesses for another holiday would be prohibitive. We also are unwilling to support a complex, unwieldy plan for split-day voting or to impose a uniform opening time that would open western polls as early as 5 a.m.

Under our plan, the states would decide for themselves when to open their polls, would count ballots when they chose and would be empowered to disclose local results in accordance with state laws.

Our approach is to mandate that all polls close no later than 11 p.m. EST. Additionally, our bill prohibits release by election officials the results of presidential elections until all polls are closed.

According to representatives of media organizations, this plan does not constitute a prior restraint because the burden of withholding results lies with the election officials rather than the press. Although we realize that the 11 p.m. EST closing time might cause some inconvenience to voters in the Alaskan time zone, we should point out that polls in Hawaii already close at 6 p.m. and that a similar closing time in Alaska will allow the polls to stay open at least 10 hours.

The voters of Oregon have voiced their concern through the state legislature, which has memorialized our congressional delegation to address this problem. We are sure that the voters in your state are concerned as well.

We have enclosed a copy of the bill for your review. If you would like to join us in this effort to create a western solution to a national problem, contact Tammy Tierney of Les AuCoin's staff at 5-0855.

With warm regards.

Sincerely,

  
LES AUCOIN

  
JIM WEAVER

  
RON WYDEN