

OREGON'S POLITICAL GRIDLOCK: EXPLORING THE CAUSES,  
IMPLICATIONS, AND RESOLUTION OF LEGISLATIVE  
WALKOUTS

by

OLIVIA DUFF

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Political Science  
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts

June 2025

## **An Abstract of the Thesis of**

Olivia Duff for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
In the Department of Political Science to be taken June 2025

Title: Oregon's Political Gridlock: Exploring the Causes, Implications, and Resolution of  
Legislative Walkouts

Approved: Chandler James, Political Science Associate Professor  
Primary Thesis Advisor

This thesis investigates the strategic use and consequences of legislative walkouts in Oregon, centering on the record-breaking 2023 Senate walkout that paralyzed the state legislature for six weeks. Through a mixed methods approach including combining interviews with lawmakers, policy analysis, and media content analysis, this study examines the motivations behind the walkout, its immediate and long-term impacts on governance, and the broader implications for democratic accountability. Oregon's unique two-thirds quorum requirement is one of only four such states in the United States to have this requirement and has helped to enable minority parties to repeatedly employ walkouts as a tool of obstruction, raising critical questions about the balance between minority rights and legislative functionality. Despite the passage of Measure 113, which sought to deter absenteeism by disqualifying lawmakers with excessive unexcused absences from reelection, the 2023 walkout demonstrated the persistence of this tactic amidst deepening partisan divides. While a newly talked-about concept, comparative analysis situates Oregon's experience within national trends, highlighting how institutional design, media framing, and public opinion interact to shape both the practice and perception of legislative protest. Therefore, this thesis asks and answers the question, what is the effectiveness of legislative walkouts as a political diversionary strategy in the state of Oregon, and in comparison, to other noteworthy walkout instances, how do the causes, strategies, and outcomes

of notable walkouts inform future approaches to similar situations within operational legislature? The final findings reveal that while walkouts can serve as an important check on majority power, their recent normalization, unmediated tendencies, and difficult journeys to resolution risk further undermining their legislative effectiveness and the public trust in democratic institutions. This research further underscores and emphasizes the pressing need for renewed discourse, debate, and understanding on topics such as institutional reform, preservation of peace, and political strategy in an era marked by defensive polarization and offensive protest.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, two people who have always stood on different sides of the aisle but walked through life with shared purpose, strength, and love. Their partnership has shown me that true commitment transcends ideology. This past year, I witnessed that strength firsthand as they faced the unimaginable with courage and grace. This work is rooted in the belief that healing, both political and personal, requires empathy, effort, and a shared commitment to the common good; that we are strong not when we agree, but when we choose to listen and show up for one another anyway.

To those who generously shared their time and insight, thank you. Your reflections shaped not only the content of this research but also deepened my understanding of both the challenges and possibilities within the democratic process.

To my advisors: thank you for your patience, guidance, and belief in this project, especially when I questioned it myself. Your wisdom carried this work through every draft, every shift in thought, and every late-night revision. I am especially grateful for your steady support as I navigated academic work alongside personal responsibility.

To the University of Oregon Government and Community Relations Department, thank you for the opportunity to learn from your work firsthand. My time with you profoundly shaped how I approached this research and affirmed my belief in the value of public service.

To my friends and extended family, thank you for your constant encouragement, especially when I was stretched thin. And to my chosen family, who helped me laugh, pause, and remember who I am beyond this work, your support has been grounding and invaluable.

Finally, to those who stood beside me in quiet, steady ways, thank you. This thesis would not exist without you. Thank you and GO DUCKS!

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	8
Introduction and Project Description	8
Methodology	10
Research Design	11
Data Collection	11
Data Analysis	11
Limitations	12
Ethical Considerations	12
Literature Review	13
Oregon’s Geographical and Cultural Diversity	13
Oregon's Unique Institutional Landscape	15
Historical Trajectory and Change	16
Escalation and Partisan Use	16
Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives	17
Polarization, Public Opinion, and Urban-Rural Divides	18
Media Framing and Long-Term Consequences	19
Conclusion	20
Chapter 1: Noteworthy Legislative Walkouts	22
Background	22
Oregon Case Study 1: The 2023 Oregon Legislative Walkout	26
Timeline	26
Recap	34
Republican Actors & Stakeholders	35
Democrat Actors & Stakeholders	39
Additional Actors & Stakeholders	44
Summary: Policy, Motivations, Data, and Contradictions	50
Oregon Case Study 2: The 2001 Oregon House Walkout	54
Oregon Case Study 3: The 2019 Oregon Senate Walkout	56
Oregon Case Study 4: The 2019 Oregon House Walkout	58
Oregon Case Study 5: The 2020 Oregon House Walkout	59

Oregon Case Study 6: The 2021 Oregon Senate Walkout	61
Texas Case Study 1: The 2003 Texas Senate Walkout	62
Texas Case Study 2: The 2021 Texas House Walkout	63
Texas Case Study 3: The 2022 Texas House Walkout	65
Indiana Case Study 1: The 2011 Indiana House Walkout	65
Rhode Island Case Study 1: The 2007 Rhode Island House Walkout	67
Wisconsin Case Study 1: The 2011 Wisconsin Senate Walkout	68
Michigan Case Study 1: The 2024 Michigan House Walkout	69
Minnesota Case Study 1: The 2025 Minnesota House Walkout	70
Summary of Case Study Findings:	71
Chapter 2: Analysis of Ethical and Political Implications	76
Ethical Complexity: Duty, Protest, and the Fragility of Civic Culture	76
The Role of Local Civic Infrastructure	78
The “Chilling Effect” and Legislative Diversity	78
Comparative Lessons: What Works Elsewhere?	78
Power Dynamics, Majority Rule, and the Erosion of Democratic Norms	79
Power Dynamics and the Laws of Power in Oregon’s Legislative Walkouts	79
Beyond Greene: The Realities and Limits of Political Power	84
Democratic Habits and the “Long Game”	85
Conclusion	85
Chapter 3: Oregon Legislative Processes and Preventative Strategies	87
Oregon Legislature Bill Procedures	87
Bill Introduction and Referral	87
Committee Review and Amendments	87
The Floor Process: First, Second, and Third Readings	88
Governor’s Approval	89
Challenges in Bill Passage and the “Not Seen” Bills	89
The “Kill Zones” of Legislative Procedure	90
Oregon Measure 113: A Comparative Analysis	91
Supporters’ Perspective	91
Critics’ Perspective	92
Legal Ruling and Immediate Impact:	92
Conclusion: A Crossroads for Oregon Politics	93
Understanding the Need for Conflict Resolution	94

Key Strategies for Legislative Conflict Resolution	94
The Ethical Role of Mediation and the Need for Political Courage	96
The Broader Implications for National Government	97
Recommendations for Preventative Resolution Bills: Addressing Legislative Gridlock and Ensuring Ethical Governance	98
Oregon Legislative Mediation and Conflict Resolution Task Force and Act	98
Oregon Legislative Transparency and Accountability Task Force and Act	99
Oregon Legislative Ethics Accountability Task Force and Act	99
Oregon Legislative Cooperation and Partnership Task Force and Act	100
Cross-Branch and Community Collaboration Task Force and Act	101
Creative Governance and Inclusive Innovation Task Force and Act	101
Conclusion: Integrating Acts and Task Forces	102
Conclusion	103
Bibliography	107

# Introduction

## Introduction and Project Description

In the spring of 2022, the drizzly campus of the University of Oregon began its usual transformation. The flowering trees stretched awake after a long winter, the fleeting sunshine danced on puddles, and students rushed through a landscape of coffee cups and bike racks. However, among the changes that were transpiring, a new climate was emerging on campus, this time, a political one. Advocacy demonstrations are hardly strangers to the UO campus, yet this time, the nature of these gatherings felt different, focused, strategic, and brimming with anticipation. During this brewing political storm, the activist group *Hold Politicians Accountable*, flanked by other advocates, set up shop near lecture halls and street corners. With clipboards in hand, they began collecting signatures for what they promised would be a pivotal moment. The true storm, however, would not make landfall until the following spring.

On May 3, 2023, nine Oregon state Republican Senators and one Independent staged a legislative walkout, leaving the Capitol and effectively freezing the legislative process. What began as a stand against policy disagreements soon became something more significant: a battle over the very mechanics of governance. The walkout stretched to a record-breaking six weeks, and in the time, it took for the freeze to thaw, it reignited an age-old debate within and outside the chamber (Rush; Ballotpedia). Are legislative walkouts a principled form of political resistance as a way for the minority to check the power of the majority, or do they sabotage democracy, turning legislative duty into a game of political brinkmanship? As with most things in politics, the answer depends on who you ask.

This thesis explores the role of legislative walkouts in Oregon politics, focusing on the 2023 walkout, a moment that underscores a broader pattern in the state's political history. While

walkouts are far from unprecedented in Oregon, their growing frequency raises pressing questions about how far political protest can go before it begins to challenge the foundations of governance, accountability, and democratic function.

Oregon's unique two-thirds quorum requirement makes it especially vulnerable to legislative standstills, granting minority parties a powerful, if controversial, tool. Oregon is one of only four states to have this requirement, but it stands out for the frequency with which it is referenced in times of protest as a strategy (Ballotpedia). Since 2019, Republican legislators in Oregon have engaged in several walkouts, strategically denying a quorum to halt legislative action on a range of contentious issues, including gun safety, reproductive rights, education funding, cap-and-trade policies, COVID-19 mandates, and redistricting efforts. While deeply held convictions or legitimate concerns may have driven these actions, they have now raised critical questions about the long-term efficacy of such a strategy. Does the repeated use of walkouts advance meaningful political objectives, or does it entrench partisan divisions and contribute to a cycle of legislative paralysis?

This research looks closely at the motivations behind the 2023 walkout and considers its short-term and long-term consequences. It also examines how media coverage shaped public opinion, whether Measure 113, passed by voters in 2022, deterred lawmakers or sparked further resistance, and how Oregon's walkout compares to similar tactics in other states (VanderHart; Ballotpedia). Through interviews with legislators, analysis of Oregon's political landscape, and a broader view of legislative protest movements, this study seeks to understand the function and fallout of political walkouts.

As walkouts become an almost annual hallmark of Oregon politics, their growing frequency demands a closer look. This study is not just about the details of one legislative event; it is about how power, and politics are shifting in Oregon in ways the state may not recover from without meaningful discourse and attention. Legislative walkouts may halt the wheels of governance, but they also expose deep fractures in the political system and force us to confront them head-on (Politico).

This research goes beyond questions about history or accountability at the state and federal levels. It asks how we move forward in an era marked by polarization and protest, where dissent can just as easily paralyze as provoke change. With Oregon as a case study, this thesis offers new perspectives on a growing political strategy with implications that reach far beyond the chamber walls (Politico; Rush). Are walkouts evidence of a system in crisis or democracy at work?

That, too, depends on who you ask.

## **Methodology**

This thesis employs a mixed-methods approach to dissect the mechanics of the 2023 Oregon Legislative Walkout (Rush; Ballotpedia). The research captures the full scope of legislative walkouts by weaving together case studies, interviews, policy analysis, media scrutiny, and comparative studies, including their motivations, consequences, and broader implications for governance, ethics, and political strategy. Interviews with key stakeholders, including legislators who walked out, those left behind, legal experts, media analysts, and political strategists, offer firsthand perspectives on the walkout's motivations and strategic calculus. Archival data from legislative records, media reports, and historical accounts add further depth, contextualizing these events within Oregon's broader political landscape.

### *Research Design*

Primary data includes interviews with politicians directly involved in or affected by the 2023 Oregon walkout. These conversations provide crucial insights into the reasoning behind the walkout and its repercussions. To supplement these firsthand accounts, secondary sources—including legislative transcripts, roll-call votes, media coverage, and public opinion data, offer a broader lens to assess the event's impact.

A significant aspect of this research involves dissecting media narratives. News reports, editorials, and televised segments from local outlets like *OPB* and national platforms like PBS are analyzed to determine how framing influenced public perception (VanderHart; Rush). By comparing coverage across media platforms, this study explores the role of political bias and selective storytelling in shaping discourse around legislative walkouts.

### *Data Collection*

As stated above, data collection combined primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources included legislative records, voting records, and media articles, which were analyzed to understand public perceptions and political dynamics. Media coverage used in this research notably shows how different outlets framed the walkout. Either as a defense of parental rights or an attack on democratic norms, as sources were scrutinized to assess its impact on public opinion (Ballotpedia; AP News).

### *Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis of interviews highlights recurring patterns in motivations, decision-making strategies, and the broader political ramifications of the 2023 walkout. Content analysis of media coverage examines how outlets like *Politico* and *OPB* framed the event and whether those narratives amplified political divisions or reinforced existing biases (Rush; VanderHart).

Comparative analysis across case studies identifies common trends in legislative walkouts, including Oregon's two-thirds quorum requirement, shared only by Indiana, Tennessee, and Texas (Ballotpedia)-and their strategic use by minority parties. Where possible, quantitative methods, such as voting pattern comparisons before and after walkouts, are employed to gauge measurable shifts in political dynamics.

### *Limitations*

This study is not without its own challenges. Direct access to key legislators was sometimes constrained, limiting the breadth of firsthand perspectives. All legislators active during the walkout were recruited for the study and had the option to participate as well as other Oregon legislators. Participation, confirmation, and approval of the study varied. Some archival data remains incomplete, particularly from earlier legislative walkouts or smaller states. Media bias presents another obstacle, as outlets often choose narratives that align with their audiences rather than providing an objective account. To mitigate this, a diverse range of sources, including progressive and conservative-leaning outlets, were used.

### *Ethical Considerations*

This research adhered to strict ethical guidelines. *The Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS)* and the *University of Oregon's Institutional Review Board (IRB)* approved this study. All interview participants provided informed consent and were given the option of confidentiality, adhering to protocols for protecting vulnerable populations in political research (Cambridge University Press; Whistleblowers.gov). Care was taken to present a balanced analysis, avoiding misrepresentation or researcher bias. Data was handled responsibly, ensuring the study maintains its integrity while respecting the individuals and institutions involved.

## Literature Review

This review synthesizes scholarship on legislative obstruction, democratic governance, and protest tactics, situating the 2023 Oregon walkout within a broader comparative and theoretical context.

### *Oregon's Geographical and Cultural Diversity*

Oregon is a state defined by its remarkable geographic diversity, ranging from the snow-capped peaks of the Cascade Mountains to forests and rolling hills of wheat, to the dramatic cliffs of its rugged coastline. Famous for its progressive policies, Oregon stands out with unique features like its 1967 Beach Bill, which guarantees public access to all 363 miles of coastline, as well as its reputation for environmental stewardship. The state's agricultural prowess is equally impressive, producing 99% of the U.S. hazelnut market and earning worldwide recognition for its wine regions, particularly the Willamette Valley (Oregon Hazelnut Industry; Willamette Valley Wineries Association).

Oregon's cultural fabric is also enriched by the keeping up of historical traditions like the *Pendleton Round-Up*. It is one of the oldest and most renowned rodeos in the country, ultimately reflecting its deep ties to Oregon's ranching and cowboy heritage as well as the necessary incorporation of Native American communities (Pendleton Round-Up Association). In addition to outdoor adventure, Oregon is known for its thriving culinary scene, with the *Tillamook Cheese Factory* offering a taste of its world-famous dairy products, while Bend has established itself as a craft beer hub, boasting more breweries per capita than any other city in the U.S. (Tillamook Cheese; Bend Ale Trail).

Oregon also boasts iconic institutions like the *Oregon Shakespeare Festival* in Ashland, drawing theater lovers from around the globe (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). *Smith Rock State Park*, renowned as the "Cradle of American Climbing," attracts adventurers from all over the world to its towering basalt spires and scenic vistas (Smith Rock State Park). And not far from the park is the city of Redmond, one of the few towns in the country apart of *Flag City USA*, a city status known for recognizing their dedication to displaying American flags and promoting patriotic spirit within their communities.

Oregon is also home to the *Oregon Institute of Marine Biology*, which conducts vital research on marine ecosystems and conservation along the state's diverse coastline (Oregon Institute of Marine Biology). Additionally, Eugene, Oregon, often called "TrackTown USA," is a renowned hub for athletics, particularly track and field, hosting prestigious events like the Prefontaine Classic and the U.S. Olympic Trials at the iconic *Hayward Field*, a track and field venue celebrated for its historic significance in the sport (USA Track & Field). The state's unique history and deep connections to Indigenous communities add another layer to its identity. Oregon is home to diverse Native tribes, such as the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla, who have endured a complex history of forced removal, broken treaties, and cultural suppression, yet continue to thrive through cultural revitalization and advocacy (Morrison 123).

This combination of environmental beauty, rich cultural history, and dynamic industries gives Oregon its distinct character, one that blends traditional values with a forward-thinking approach to community, policy, and the natural world. But this isn't a thesis on tourism.

### *Oregon's Unique Institutional Landscape*

As previously mentioned, Oregon's political system is distinguished by its two-thirds quorum requirement, one of only four such rules in the U.S., which empowers the minority party to halt legislative business by simply refusing to attend (Ballotpedia). Originally intended to foster bipartisan cooperation, this rule has become a powerful tool for obstruction, used with increasing frequency as partisan divides deepen (PBS). While Republicans have most recently employed walkouts, Democrats used the same tactic in 2001 to block redistricting, demonstrating that the maneuver is not inherently partisan but structurally enabled (Ballotpedia). The entrenchment of minority power through procedural mechanisms in Oregon mirrors broader national patterns described by Berman, who argues that counter-majoritarian tactics including legislative walkouts are part of a historical strategy to entrench minority rule and resist demographic and political change (Berman).

Legal scholars have noted that the enforcement and constitutionality of measures like Measure 113, which bars lawmakers with ten or more unexcused absences from reelection, raise complex questions about legislative discipline, separation of powers, and the rights of elected officials to represent their constituents (Bulman-Pozen 1129; Gerken 720). Bulman-Pozen argues that state constitutions often reflect unique legislative autonomy and accountability balances. Oregon's approach is now a case study of how far states can discipline their members (Bulman-Pozen 1131).

The passage of Measure 113 was a direct response to public frustration with legislative gridlock. However, despite the threat, participants in the walkout demonstrated that institutional reforms alone were not sufficient to entirely deter minority obstruction when the stakes are perceived as existential (PBS; KLCC). Brave or stubborn? Oregonians were stuck between this

verdict, with some praising and others criticizing the legislators, partisanship emerged from these differing views with little middle exposure. This mentality highlights a more profound crisis in governance, where procedural rules and political incentives collide. As some scholars suggest, escalating polarization can undermine legislative productivity and public trust, stretch the fabric of democratic governance and lead to paralysis in decision-making (Mannan and Noreen).

### *Historical Trajectory and Change*

Oregon's legislative culture has shifted significantly over the past several decades. Oregon is a solid mix of economies, lifestyles, and priorities that have shaped our politics. Scholars such as Squire and Hamm have documented the decline of "The Oregon Way," a tradition of bipartisan cooperation, noting that state legislatures nationwide have become more professionalized and polarized, leading to increased use of hardball tactics like walkouts (Squire and Hamm 87). Additionally, Robbins' history of Oregon politics further contextualizes these developments, tracing the evolution from consensus building to today's more adversarial environment (Robbins 284).

Polarization has been as cultivated in Oregon as have its major crops been. However, unlike the Christmas trees, hazelnuts, and blackberries grown through demanding work for nourishment and celebration in Oregon, the political divide that has taken root in has done so in bitterness, spreading not sustenance but strife. Polarization is not inherently evil. It can rally people from diverse walks of life around common causes. However, it is the most potent political force for turning disagreement into division and the hardest to step away from once entrenched.

### *Escalation and Partisan Use*

Since 2019, Oregon Senate Republicans have staged extended walkouts three times, sometimes joined by House Republicans, to block Democratic priorities on issues ranging from

climate policy to social legislation (PBS). The 2023 walkout, centered on bills related to abortion, transgender healthcare, and gun control but also reflected a broader opposition to what Republicans described as a radical Democratic agenda (PBS). While Democrats agreed to amend some provisions to end the standoff, what remained unsolved has further underscored the limits of negotiation in a deeply polarized environment. The increasing normalization of obstructionist tactics in Oregon aligns with Ari Berman's thesis that minority rule is perpetuated through both formal and informal mechanisms, often justified as necessary checks on majority power but with the effect of undermining representative democracy (Berman).

### *Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives*

Oregon's experience mirrors but also diverges from legislative walkouts in other states. In Texas (2003, 2021) and Wisconsin (2011), minority parties used walkouts to block redistricting and union reforms, respectively (Ballotpedia). Nevertheless, Oregon stands out for the frequency and duration of its walkouts and the implementation of electoral penalties through Measure 113 (Ballotpedia). Comparative research on protest and legislative behavior, such as LaGina Gause's work, demonstrates that protest tactics, including walkouts, can increase the salience of issues and push legislators to respond to the preferences of mobilized groups, especially those with fewer resources (Gause). This dynamic complicates the obstruction narrative, suggesting that disruptive tactics may sometimes amplify marginalized voices within legislative processes.

Empirical studies by Moncrief and Squire show that legislative productivity tends to decline in states with frequent walkouts or other forms of obstruction, reinforcing the link between procedural hardball and legislative gridlock (Moncrief and Squire 211). Additionally, recent quantitative research finds that public approval of legislatures drops sharply following

high-profile walkouts, indicating that these tactics can have lasting effects on institutional legitimacy (Rogers 1023).

Scholars have also begun to debate whether walkouts are legitimate tools for protecting minority rights or dangerous disruptions to democratic governance. Lijphart's theory of consociationalism frames such tactics as "mutual vetoes," intended to safeguard minority interests in plural societies (Lijphart 22). However, Levitsky and Ziblatt warn that repeated norm-breaking behaviors such as walkouts can erode institutional trust and push democracies toward dysfunction, especially in highly polarized environments (Levitsky and Ziblatt 98). On the other hand, Dahl's foundational work on democracy reminds us of that institutional forbearance and mutual toleration are essential for long-term democratic stability (Dahl 38). The Oregon case thus exemplifies the strategic use of minority power and the risks of legislative paralysis by showing a lack of tolerance and action to continue government function.

### *Polarization, Public Opinion, and Urban-Rural Divides*

Oregon's legislative walkouts are both a symptom and a cause of deepening political polarization, particularly along urban-rural lines (PBS). Progressive urban centers and conservative rural regions frequently clash over social and environmental policy, making compromise elusive and protest tactics more appealing (Mannan and Noreen). This polarization is reflected in and reinforced by legislative behavior. Levitsky and Ziblatt argue that extreme polarization erodes democratic norms, making it easier for political actors to justify extraordinary measures to block their opponents from governing (Levitsky and Ziblatt 104). Oregon has in the past embodied this dynamic, as lawmakers on both sides increasingly resort to obstruction rather than mediation when negotiation fails. Public opinion plays a crucial, though often understudied, role in this phenomenon.

For example, the passage of Measure 113 by a wide voter margin reflects widespread frustration with legislative gridlock and absenteeism. Nevertheless, even after such reforms, the persistence of tension in the legislature suggests a troubling disconnect between institutional change and actual political behavior (PBS). Research indicates that protest actions, including walkouts, can drastically shift legislative behavior, particularly when legislators signal strong constituent preferences or bring neglected issues to the forefront and have no means of seeing them through (Gause 15).

### *Media Framing and Long-Term Consequences*

Media coverage, both local and national, has played a key role in shaping how the public views legislative walkouts, framing them either as principled acts of protest or as partisan obstruction. These portrayals can sway short-term political outcomes and influence long-term trust in democratic institutions (PBS). Media narratives and institutional reactions to protest movements can either reinforce anti-democratic patterns or help push back against them, affecting the strength and stability of democracy itself (Berman 142). Despite growing attention, there is still a lack of research on the long-term impact of repeated walkouts, particularly on legislative norms, public confidence in government, and the power dynamics between majority and minority parties.

Policy scholars such as Gerken and Bulman-Pozen suggest that future reforms might include changes to quorum requirements, alternative penalties, or new incentives for bipartisan cooperation but warn that such reforms must balance accountability with minority rights and constitutional protections (Gerken 725; Bulman-Pozen 1133). The media must recognize the intricacies of this issue properly. However, as Lance Bennett demonstrates, the news frequently struggles to move beyond surface-level narratives and instead relies on established patterns of

coverage that can obscure deeper political dynamics. In *News: The Politics of Illusion*, Bennett explains that the press often frames political conflict as a strategic game, emphasizing dramatic confrontations and insider commentary at the expense of substantive analysis. He writes.

"The present era comes across in the news as one of strategic posturing on the part of many officials, which the press often frames as a game, reflecting the growing role of punditry and commentary in contemporary journalism. Journalists now routinely interview other journalists as news sources, posturing as political insiders providing color commentary on the posturing of politicians and parties. Politicians' and journalists' posturing and cynicism has turned off many citizens, who feel that Washington is out of touch with the people and that the news does a poor job explaining why this has happened" (Bennett 38).

As Bennett argues, this tendency toward dramatization and fragmentation can leave the public with an incomplete understanding of complex political phenomena like legislative walkouts, undermining democratic engagement and trust in both media and government.

## **Conclusion**

The 2023 Oregon legislative walkout vividly illustrates how institutional rules and deepening partisan divides can reshape governance practice. Oregon's two-thirds quorum requirement, intended to foster bipartisan cooperation, has enabled minority parties to wield extraordinary leverage, making walkouts a recurring and increasingly normalized feature of the state's political landscape (Ballotpedia; OPB). While such protests can serve as powerful tools for minority voices, their repeated use has also exposed the limits of negotiation and compromise in a polarized era. Despite reforms like Measure 113, which sought to deter absenteeism through electoral penalties, the persistence of walkouts underscores the difficulty of addressing structural incentives through legal means alone (OPB) as both a symptom and a driver of polarization, legislative walkouts in Oregon highlight the tension between protecting minority rights and maintaining effective, accountable governance.

Oregon's experience is a cautionary tale for other states and democracies grappling with similar institutional vulnerabilities. The normalization of walkouts reveals how well-intentioned procedural safeguards can be repurposed to undermine legislative effectiveness and public trust. Media coverage and public opinion have further shaped the narrative, influencing these tactics' perception and political consequences. The long-term effects of repeated walkouts on public trust, legislative norms, and citizens' willingness to engage with democratic processes remain uncertain. As Oregon continues to navigate the challenges of polarization and institutional reform, its experience will offer valuable lessons for the future of representative democracy within and beyond.

## Chapter 1: Noteworthy Legislative Walkouts

### Background

When someone embarks on a journey to understand their own political beliefs, the first step is not just about picking a side, though many might suggest otherwise. It is about wading through the murky waters of morality, justice, and in an imperfect world, the lived experiences that shape our values. Reality is rarely as simple as black or white, red or blue, vivid color or empty void. Multiple truths can coexist at once, intertwining in contradictions and complexities, overall reminding us that the world is not a rigid binary. Rather, it is a broad spectrum of nuance, perspective, and possibility. Realizing that for oneself can be as challenging a battle as any, but it is crucial, nonetheless.

Once that identity is found and rooted in their own truth, a second step emerges, which is navigating how to express that political consciousness in the public arena. Modern debate can feel less like a marketplace of ideas and more like an intricate game of strategy. However, in a world where it appears that everyone is playing to win, some have posed a curious question. What if the most powerful move was refusing to play at all?

Enter the walkouts of the modern age. Today, legislative walkouts may be polished affairs, with press conferences, public statements, and coordinated absences. When looking at the past, it is vital to acknowledge that while modern practices are disruptive, the USA has come a long way to escape its tumultuous history. One of the most dramatic early examples of legislative protests occurred in the 1924 Rhode Island Senate, where a political crisis unfolded over several months, marked by deadlock, physical altercations, and even a gas attack in the Senate chamber.

At the time, the Rhode Island Senate was nearly evenly split. Republicans held a slight edge with twenty senators, while Democrats had eighteen. Independent Senator Jesse Hopkins of Coventry often sided with the Democrats, making the chamber volatile (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs and a Bomb"; Hubbard 234). Lieutenant Governor Felix A. Toupin, a Democrat, presided as ex officio President, giving Democrats a strategic advantage in a state notorious for political machine influence (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs and a Bomb").

Democrats aimed to pass progressive reforms, including a 48-hour workweek and the abolition of property qualifications for voting in city council elections. Facing staunch opposition from the Republican majority, Democrats resorted to a marathon filibuster beginning in January 1924, with senators taking turns speaking for hours and reading from Shakespeare and the Encyclopedia Britannica, hoping to wear down the opposition (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs and a Bomb"; New York Times, June 19, 1924). Toupin famously read from *Hamlet* for 42 hours, even eating and shaving at the rostrum. During one particularly long stretch, he used a device to relieve himself, not to yield to the floor (Kurtz).

As the filibuster dragged into June, the oppressive heat and lack of ventilation intensified tempers. Fistfights broke out on the Senate floor, and the atmosphere grew increasingly volatile. On June 19, 1924, a bromine gas bomb was detonated under the rostrum of Lieutenant Governor Toupin, knocking several senators' unconscious and causing chaos in the chamber (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs, and a Bomb"; New York Times, June 20, 1924). Toupin was not affected by the gas initially, as he had a towel over his face while shaving (Kurtz). Bromine gas is a chemical irritant, and that day, it caused severe coughing fits and burning eyes, sending senators and staff scrambling for the exits. No one was seriously injured, but the attack cemented

the crisis as one of the most bizarre political showdowns in American history (Warwick Online). The act, widely believed to be orchestrated by Republican operatives, marked a nadir in legislative decorum. The Providence Journal offered a reward for information, and it was later reported that Republican leaders hired Boston gangster William "Toots" Murray to plant the bomb (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs, and a Bomb").

In the aftermath, most Republican senators fled the state to Rutland, Massachusetts, where Rhode Island law could not compel their return, effectively denying the Senate a quorum and paralyzing state government for the remainder of the year (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs and a Bomb"; Hubbard 235). Democrats even physically assaulted a Republican senator who briefly returned, trying to force him into the chamber to reestablish a quorum. Meanwhile, the absent Republicans, fearing capture, continued to devise elaborate escape plans, including fleeing through secret tunnels and hiding in hotels across state lines (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs and a Bomb").

With no quorum, the Rhode Island Senate was paralyzed, drawing national attention as newspapers reported on the chaos and dysfunction (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs, and a Bomb"; New York Times, June 20, 1924). In the aftermath, most Democratic senators lost their seats in the November elections, and Republicans reclaimed power after their self-imposed exile (Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs and a Bomb"; Small State Big History, "Robert E. Quinn and the Political Revolution of 1935").

While filibusters are typically associated with prolonged speeches, there was an apparent abuse of power in this example, yet here it was the walkout by denying a quorum that ultimately brought the government to a halt (Kurtz; Small State Big History, "Filibuster, Fisticuffs, and a Bomb"). No one emerged blameless in this instance, and as the public watched events unfold,

their distrust and frustration toward the political system that was supposed to represent them only deepened the crisis. When tensions inside the chamber spill over into the public sphere, especially after instances of neglect by their government, it becomes all too easy for the public to conflate all disruptive political actions, regardless of their intent. Such conflation fuels cynicism about politics and deepens the polarization that makes constructive dialogue difficult today.

While forgotten as more pressing political moments have arisen in the hundred plus years since then, the 1924 Rhode Island Senate crisis remains a classic example of how legislative walkouts and filibusters can be wielded through endless speeches or strategic absences as powerful tools of protest and obstruction, with consequences that reverberate far beyond the chamber walls.

The Rhode Island standoff may seem like an absurd relic of another era, yet its legacy endures. Across the nation, from Texas to Oregon, legislative walkouts and other forms of protest have not only persisted but have become institutionalized tactics within government procedure (Ballotpedia). Whether viewed as an essential check on majority rule or as a dereliction of democratic duty, these moments profoundly shape the legislative process and the relationships among lawmakers (OPB, "After record-breaking legislative walkout"; PBS).

This chapter will help answer the following questions. Are they necessary checks on majority power or dramatic manifestations of polarization? Have reforms like Oregon's Measure 113 succeeded in curbing obstruction, or do they risk entrenching partisan divides? Moreover, who, ultimately, is the "villain" in these stories, the majority, the minority, or the system itself? Scholars have even debated the concept of the "rotating villain," where lawmakers alternately obstruct legislation to diffuse accountability or maintain party unity (Reddit; Ballotpedia).

Answering these questions requires a contextual foundation that defines common themes, such as quorum exploitation, procedural brinkmanship, and urban-rural divides, and evaluates how society judges their legitimacy. By examining significant state legislative walkouts, this section analyzes their motivations, consequences, and implications for governance in an era of heightened polarization, offering insights into whether such tactics safeguard democracy or sabotage it (Phys.org; SIEPR).

### **Oregon Case Study 1: The 2023 Oregon Legislative Walkout**

#### *Timeline*

By May 3, 2023, the Oregon Legislature was 106 days into its 160-day regular session well past the halfway point and deep in the thick of debates, policymaking, and budget talks, with just over 50 days left before the required adjournment on June 25 (Ballotpedia, "2023 Oregon legislative session"; Civics Learning Project). This session came with significant leadership changes. In the Senate, Rob Wagner, a Democrat from Lake Oswego, had just taken over as Senate President after Peter Courtney's long tenure (Oregon Legislature; Ballotpedia, "2023 Oregon legislative session"). Tim Knopp, a Republican from Bend, stayed on as Senate Minority Leader, and Kate Lieber, a Democrat from Beaverton, became Senate Majority Leader (Wikipedia, "Tim Knopp"; Wikipedia, "Kate Lieber"). Over in the House, Dan Rayfield, a Democrat from Corvallis, was in his first long session as Speaker, with Julie Fahey of West Eugene as House Majority Leader and Vikki Breese-Iverson, a Republican from Prineville as House Minority Leader (KTVL; Government and Community Relations).

This session followed the rules set by Measure 71, passed in 2010, which established annual legislative sessions. 160 days in odd-numbered years and 35 days in even-numbered years, replacing the old biennial system (Ballotpedia, "2023 Oregon legislative session"; Civics

Learning Project). Lawmakers had a limited window to push their priorities and finish the state budget, so the pressure was on as the session wore on (Ballotpedia, "2023 Oregon legislative session").

That is the backdrop for what happened on May 3, when Republican senators walked out during early discussions of House Bills 2005 and 2002, and over concerns about ORS 171.134, the state's readability rule for legislative digests and summaries (Ballotpedia, "2023 Oregon legislative session"). Their absence denied the Senate a quorum and brought legislative business to a standstill at a crucial moment for the state.

House Bill 2005, known as the Oregon Firearm Regulation and Safety Act, became a flashpoint in the 2023 legislative session as lawmakers grappled with rising concerns about gun violence and the proliferation of untraceable "ghost guns." The bill sought to ban undetectable firearms, guns that cannot be detected by standard security screening and imposed severe penalties for their manufacture, import, sale, or transfer, including up to ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Possession alone could result in a year in jail and a \$6,250 fine ("House Bill 2005"). Supporters of the bill, including many Democrats and gun safety advocates, argued that it was a necessary step to close dangerous loopholes and keep communities safe. "We are seeing an increase in untraceable firearms used in crimes, and this legislation is about making sure law enforcement has the tools to keep Oregonians safe," said one Democratic sponsor (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout").

Republicans, however, strongly opposed the measure, contending that it infringed on Second Amendment rights and would punish responsible gun owners without meaningfully reducing crime. As Senate Minority Leader Tim Knopp argued, "This bill is not about public safety. It is about advancing a political agenda that does nothing to address the root causes of gun

violence" (Associated Press; OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout").

The debate over HB 2005 reflected the broader national divide over gun control, with both sides accusing the other of ignoring the factual issues facing Oregon communities (Associated Press).

Meanwhile, House Bill 2002, the Oregon Reproductive Health and Gender-Affirming Care Act, was introduced as a sweeping response to the shifting national landscape on reproductive rights following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. The bill aimed to protect access to abortion and gender-affirming care, shield providers and patients from out-of-state legal actions, and require insurance coverage for medically necessary gender-affirming treatments ("House Bill 2002"). It also established a right of action for individuals or providers facing interference with health care facilities, further strengthening protections for those seeking care in Oregon (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout").

Proponents argued that HB 2002 was essential to ensure that Oregon remained a haven for reproductive freedom and LGBTQ+ rights, especially as neighboring states enacted more restrictive laws. "Oregon must stand strong in protecting the rights of all people to access the care they need, regardless of what happens elsewhere," said Senate Majority Leader Kate Lieber (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"). However, Republican lawmakers and critics voiced alarm that the bill would erode parental rights, particularly regarding minors seeking abortion or gender-affirming care without parental consent and could make Oregon a destination for out-of-state procedures (Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2023; Associated Press). They argued that the legislation "goes too far and removes important safeguards for parents and families" (Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2023).

Among the political discourse emerged Oregon Revised Statute 171.134, enacted in 1979, requires that any measure digest or summary prepared by the Legislative Assembly must be written to achieve a score of at least 60 on the Flesch Reading Ease test or meet an equivalent standard on a comparable readability test (Oregon.public.law; "ORS 171.134 – Readability Test for Legislative Digests and Summaries"). This statute was designed to ensure that legislative documents are accessible and understandable to the public, reflecting a longstanding commitment to government transparency and civic engagement in Oregon. The Flesch Reading Ease test, created by Rudolf Flesch in the 1940s, assigns a score from 1 to 100 based on sentence length and word complexity; higher scores indicate easier readability. A score between 70 and 80 is considered equivalent to an eighth grade reading level, meaning most adults should easily understand the text (Readable.com). The Flesch–Kincaid readability tests, including the Reading Ease and Grade Level metrics, are widely used to assess a difficult passage for the average reader (Wikipedia).

During the 2023 legislative session, Republican senators repeatedly cited ORS 171.134 as a procedural concern, arguing that the summaries for contentious bills, such as House Bills 2002 and 2005, were written in overly complex language that failed to meet the statutory standard. They contended that this lack of clarity risked disenfranchising Oregonians by making it difficult for the public, stakeholders, and even some lawmakers to fully comprehend the proposed legislation (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"). As Senate Minority Leader Tim Knopp explained in a July 2023 address, "When the majority of bill summaries demand a post-graduate degree to understand, we disenfranchise Oregonians across the state and violate the law in the process" (Ballotpedia; OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"). For Republicans, the failure for the legislature to address these

readability concerns, alongside the substance of the bills themselves, became a final breaking point that contributed directly to their decision to stage the walkout. This procedural dispute underscored deeper tensions over legislative transparency, public access, and the fundamental right of Oregonians to understand the laws that govern them.

As May progressed, Republican senators escalated their opposition by abstaining from key votes, preventing the Oregon Senate from reaching the two-thirds quorum required to conduct business (Ballotpedia, "2023 Oregon legislative session"). This move effectively stalled legislative proceedings, drawing increasing media scrutiny and public debate (OPB, "Oregon voters tried to put an end to legislative walkouts"; Reuters). Senate President Rob Wagner criticized the walkout, emphasizing its negative impact on legislative operations and the ability to pass crucial bills, including the state budget (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"). Democrats attempted to continue legislative work, but the absence of Republican senators prevented votes on essential bills, including budget measures needed to fund public services (Reuters).

As the walkout continued, concerns began to grow over the fate of House Bill 5002, the biennial budget bill introduced at the request of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services. HB 5002 appropriated funds from the General Fund to various state agencies and included allocations for the Chief Operating Officer, court-appointed special advocates, *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, the *Oregon Historical Society*, the *State Fair Council*, and other entities. The bill also limited certain biennial expenditures from fees, federal funds, lottery money, and other revenues and included an emergency clause to make it effective July 1, 2023 (Oregon Legislative Information System, "HB 5002").

Throughout this period, both parties discussed negotiations and concessions, but no agreement was reached as the session's constitutional deadline approached (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"; Reuters). As the session wore on, several senators accrued at least ten unexcused absences, even after being informed of the consequences, and ultimately making them ineligible for reelection under Measure 113 which has passed earlier and was later upheld at the judiciary level (Ballotpedia, "2023 Oregon legislative session").

By late May 2023, the Oregon Senate walkout had entered its most contentious phase, with Republican senators escalating their demands for legislative changes, particularly around the state's readability law, ORS 171.134. After consulting with Legislative Counsel, Senate President Rob Wagner ruled that the bills complied with the law, a decision supported by Senate Democrats (Oregon State Legislature, "Oregon's Accountability Crisis"). Republicans, however, continued to object and proposed sending bills back to the committee for revision, but these motions were voted down (Oregon State Legislature, "Oregon's Accountability Crisis"; KGW).

Republicans demanded that HB 2002 be revised, particularly to remove provisions expanding abortion access and to retain parental consent requirements for minors under fifteen seeking an abortion. They also pushed for a narrower approach to HB 2005, advocating for a focus on ghost guns and increased mental health support rather than sweeping firearm restrictions (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"; OPB, "Oregon reproductive rights and gender-affirming care bill heads to governor's desk").

As the walkout reached June, the Senate remained at an impasse. The mounting uncertainty led to increased pressure from business leaders, school districts, and public sector unions, all warning of the dire consequences if the legislature failed to act (Reuters; Oregon Capital Insider). Governor Tina Kotek publicly urged lawmakers to resolve the standoff,

warning, "Oregonians are tired of walkouts. Out of respect for the people of this state and our basic duties as lawmakers, we should be holding public, transparent debate and voting on bills—not walking away from the job" (Oregon Capital Insider; OPB, "Oregon voters tried to put an end to legislative walkouts"). She emphasized the importance of passing the budget, cautioning that failure would threaten public education, infrastructure, and healthcare funding (Reuters).

By mid-June, as the session's deadline approached, negotiations intensified behind the scenes. On June 14, a tentative agreement was reached that allowed for significant revisions to HB 2002 and other contested legislation (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"). As part of the deal, Democrats agreed to retain parental consent requirements for minors under 15 seeking abortions, with an exception if two healthcare providers from separate practices determined that informing parents would harm the child (OPB, "Oregon reproductive rights and gender-affirming care bill heads to governor's desk"). Democrats also removed provisions from HB 2002 that would have expanded abortion access on university campuses and in rural areas. However, the bill still expanded insurance coverage for gender-affirming care. It provided legal protection for providers performing abortions for patients from states where the procedure is restricted (OPB, "Oregon reproductive rights and gender-affirming care bill heads to governor's desk").

Additionally, Senate Joint Resolution 33, which aimed to enshrine protections for abortion, same-sex marriage, and transgender care in Oregon's state constitution, was withdrawn as part of the compromise. While Republicans had expressed support for the same-sex marriage portion, the broader resolution did not proceed (OPB, "Oregon lawmakers make a deal to end Senate walkout"; Oregon Legislature, "Democratic Leaders Introduce Expanded Equal Rights Constitutional Referral").

Republicans also secured significant concessions on House Bill 2005. While the original proposal sought to outlaw untraceable "ghost guns", raise the minimum age to purchase and own most firearms from 18 to 21, and allow cities to ban concealed weapons in public buildings, only the provision banning ghost guns remained after negotiations (OPB, "Oregon Republicans..."). Republicans agreed to return to the Senate after these changes were made. On June 15, 2023, the walkout ended, and the legislature passed the amended bills, including HB 5002, ensuring continued funding for essential public services.

The six-week walkout ended with both sides claiming some measure of victory. Senate President Rob Wagner remarked, "I am grateful for all the senators who listened to each other and sought an end to this walkout while protecting Oregon priorities and values" (KGW). However, the events that transpired left deep divisions and lasting questions about the future of legislative protest and governance in Oregon.

Many find it hard to believe there was a hopeful spirit of bipartisanship at the start of the 2023 Oregon Legislative session. Agenda items such as semiconductor expansion, job manufacturing for Silicon Forest, and early learning reading programs, among many more items, led to a productive start. Senator Daniel Bonham, who participated in the walkout and this research study, noted that early discussions centered on the bipartisan goals of advancing the Chips Act and addressing the critical housing and homelessness issues across all districts.

In 2023, Oregon's homeless rate was among the highest in the nation, with an estimated 20,000 people experiencing homelessness in the state (Willamette Week, 2024). This heightened focus on housing and homelessness led to collaborative discussions, with both parties agreeing on urgent action to address the crisis (Homeless No More, 2024). Bonham reflected, "Interestingly, the session started very bipartisan... We had a common cause on trying to

advance the discussion around housing and homelessness" (OPB). However, as the session progressed, introducing hyper-partisan bills marked a sharp shift in the dynamic (The Oregonian, 2023). Despite these efforts, the growing partisan divide around other bills, particularly those related to abortion and gun control, complicated the path forward, further highlighting the challenges of bipartisan cooperation (Axios, 2024). What initially appeared to be a promising cooperative effort soon became an intense partisan division, contributing to the walkout and subsequent political gridlock (The Oregonian, 2023).

### *Recap*

The 2023 Oregon Legislative Walkout unfolded like a high-stakes political poker game, with both sides bluffing and withholding their cards while insisting they were ready to fold if only the other side would show their hand first. Eventually, that bluffing boiled over into action, and that action became the all-in strategy we love and fear. On one side, Democrats publicly extended multiple offers to negotiate later in the walkout, hoping to break the deadlock. They were met with Republican calls for concessions on sensitive issues. However, these negotiations were often muddied by mixed signals from both parties. The Republicans, though at times offering their compromises, often seemed hesitant, signaling that they were unwilling to budge on key issues without guarantees. And Democrats? They, too, played their hand carefully, stressing the importance of protecting policies on which they had campaigned.

What followed was a tense, multi-month standoff in which both sides had their wins and losses. Republicans succeeded in securing some of their demands, but the process left a trail of unresolved issues and an air of distrust. The walkout concluded only after key issues, like abortion and gun rights, were addressed in some form but not without significant political cost.

Though productive, the back-and-forth negotiations were too bogged down to yield a decisive, clear resolution (OPB).

As the dust settled, the question loomed: What is best for Oregon? Is it truly the power struggle, or should we be looking for ways to prevent such blockages in the future, where every walkout leaves the state dangling on a string of partisan gamesmanship? It is a question that transcends any group's immediate political wins.

It is time to ask: What will bring us closer to meaningful, sustainable governance that serves all Oregonians? The conversation about reforming the tools available to lawmakers, especially in the context of walkouts and boycotts, has only just begun, with some advocating for stricter quorum requirements or enhanced penalties for legislators who engage in prolonged absenteeism (The Oregonian, 2023). Should future walkouts be allowed to hold the state hostage, or could there be a better way forward?

### *Republican Actors & Stakeholders*

The Republican senators walked out primarily for one reason, and that was after perceiving the bills as harmful to rural Oregonians, both economically and culturally. They felt that the Democratic majority was pushing policies that failed to consider the needs of rural communities, and their walkout was a form of protest against what they viewed as government overreach. But who were these senators and what do their districts represent?

Sen. Tim Knopp (R) represents District 27, which centers on Bend and much of Deschutes County, a region known for its rapid growth, outdoor recreation, and a blend of urban and rural interests. Knopp, a longtime Republican leader and former House member, has been at the forefront of several high-profile walkouts, including those in 2019 and 2023. As Senate Minority Leader, he led the 2023 walkout, arguing it was a “peaceful constitutional protest”

against what he described as unlawful legislative procedures and an uncompromising Democratic agenda, particularly on abortion and gender-affirming care. Knopp's assertive leadership style has made him both a prominent figure in Oregon politics and a polarizing one, especially as he and his caucus faced disqualification from future terms under Measure 113 (OPB; Politico; Wikipedia).

Sen. Dennis Linthicum (R) represents District 28, which includes all Klamath County and parts of Deschutes and Jackson counties. Senator Linthicum is known for his strong conservative stances and advocacy for rural interests. The district is characterized by its agricultural economy, water rights issues, and conservative electorate. Linthicum has participated in multiple walkouts, including the 2019 and 2023 protests, consistently positioning himself as a defender of parental rights and traditional values. His unexcused absences in 2023 led to his disqualification from reelection, but he remains influential in the district, endorsing his wife to run for his seat and maintaining fanatical support among constituents who viewed the walkout as principled resistance (KATU; KPIC).

Sen. Lynn Findley (R) represents District 30, the largest Senate district in Oregon, encompassing Baker, Crook, Grant, Harney, Lake, and Malheur counties, as well as parts of Deschutes and Jefferson counties. This vast, rural district is known for its ranching, agriculture, and public lands. Findley, a former city manager and county commissioner, joined the 2023 walkout and later sued to challenge the constitutionality of Measure 113's penalties. He has been vocal about his disagreements with Senate leadership, even filing complaints against the Senate President over the handling of excused absences during the walkout, which he called a "sham" process (IJPR).

Sen. Daniel Bonham (R) represents District 26, which includes The Dalles and the Columbia River Gorge, a region known for its agriculture, wind energy, and scenic beauty. Bonham, a business owner, cited his opposition to House Bill 2002, expanding abortion and gender-affirming care protections as a key reason for his participation in the 2023 walkout. He has mostly stayed away from the Capitol during the protest, returning only briefly, and has been a consistent critic of what he views as overreach by the Democratic majority (OPB).

In an interview conducted on behalf of this study Bonham described being not just a supporter but a chief instigator of the walkout:

“I was one of the people that advocated that we should walk. Ballot 113...said there was a potential consequence. If you walked out for more than ten days...that was a fundamental violation of not only my First Amendment rights, but of the 140,000 people that live in my district” (Bonham). He added, “The quorum denial is part of the Constitution. They did not change that. They just said that if you violated that, that there would be a consequence. So, you know, technically today, even though now we know there is a consequence and there is no question about how the court’s ruled on that, we can still deny. We can do it tomorrow. lol, we are not in session yet.”

Bonham described how he personally warned Democratic leadership: “I went to Senate President Wagner...and I said, hey, I just need you to know if you bring that bill, unamended to the Senate, I’m going to walk and I’m going to take 11 friends with me...they didn’t believe me.” He felt Democrats underestimated the seriousness of the threat: “I think they thought that ballot measure 113 was such a good check because none of us would be willing to give up our jobs...when we got nine today, they were flabbergasted.”

He also revealed the emotional and community dimension: “People sent funds to try and help fight the legal battle...if you put my name back in a ballot in 2026, I think I’d probably win by the same 20% I won by last time.” Bonham was candid about the “nuclear option” nature of walkouts: “I am a little bit concerned about the fact that we deployed it as much as we did in

2019, 2020, 2023, the expectation from constituents became that anything they didn't like, they wanted you to walk out over. And I do not think that is a good standard.”

He also noted the impact of Measure 113 on religious and medical absences: “We had three people, well, four people, in the end...that were approved to have medical excuses while another one was rejected...people that were gone for religious reasons...very specifically Cedric Hayden as a pretty devout Seventh-day Adventist...so offensive to me that we have these sacred rites, like religious freedom and religious protection, that weren't afforded to Republicans, and that there was no due process at all to appeal that decision” (Bonham).

Sen. Suzanne Weber (R) represents District 16, which covers the North Coast, including Gales Creek and Banks, areas known for forestry, fishing, and tourism. Weber, a former mayor and educator, became ineligible for reelection in 2026 after missing 10 Senate floor sessions during the 2023 walkout (Gales Creek Journal).

Sen. Bill Hansell (R) represents District 29, which covers a vast swath of Northeastern Oregon, including Wallowa, Union, Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, and parts of Wasco and Jefferson counties. The district is known for its agricultural heritage and rural communities. Hansell, a former county commissioner, participated in previous walkouts but expressed concerns about the increasing frequency and pressure from interest groups. He announced his retirement before the 2023 walkout, which also stalled his effort to have the potato named the state vegetable. Hansell has faced threats for his decisions during past walkouts, highlighting the intense pressures on rural lawmakers (Wallowa; Oregon Capital Insider).

Sen. Brian Boquist (I) formerly a Republican and now an Independent, represents District 12, which includes Dallas and parts of Polk and Yamhill counties, areas known for agriculture, wineries, and small towns. Boquist joined the 2023 walkout, accruing enough absences to be

barred from reelection. He has a history of aligning with walkout tactics and has often positioned himself as a maverick willing to challenge both parties (OPB).

Sen. Cedric Hayden (R) represents District 6, covering parts of the Southern Willamette Valley, an area with a mix of agriculture, timber, and small towns. Hayden, a dentist and missionary, participated in the 2023 walkout and later joined lawsuits challenging Measure 113. He has also raised concerns about the Senate's handling of excused absences, citing religious and family obligations denied during the protest (IJPR).

Sen. Kim Thatcher (R) serves District 11, which includes Keizer and parts of Salem's northern suburbs. The district is suburban, with a mix of residential communities and small businesses. Thatcher, a business owner and longtime legislator, participated in the 2023 walkout, adding to her record of using procedural tactics to oppose Democratic priorities. She is now barred from seeking reelection due to her absences (Oregon Capital Insider)

### *Democrat Actors & Stakeholders*

Several Democratic lawmakers were also key figures in pushing for the legislation during the 2023 Oregon Legislative Walkout. These individuals, especially Senate President Rob Wagner, Governor Tina Kotek, and Senator Kate Lieber, were publicly vocal in calling for Republican senators to return to the Capitol. They stood firmly in favor of the Clean Energy Jobs Bill and other progressive legislation, arguing that such bills were crucial for the state's future.

Rob Wagner represents District 19, an affluent suburban area south of Portland, known for its high-performing schools and civic engagement. Wagner, a former school board member and education advocate, became Senate President in 2023 and was a central figure during the walkout. He refused to excuse the absences of Republican senators, enforcing Measure 113.

Wagner stated, "We have achieved major bipartisan victories already this session, and I expect

that to continue now that we have returned to the floor. I am grateful for all the senators who listened to each other and sought an end to this walkout while protecting Oregon priorities and values” (OPB; East Oregonian).

Kate Lieber’s District 14 covers Beaverton and Aloha, rapidly growing suburbs with diverse populations and a strong tech industry presence. Lieber, an attorney and former prosecutor, became Senate Majority Leader in 2023. She was outspoken during the walkout, saying, “It is no coincidence that Republicans are employing these embarrassing antics as the Senate is about to vote on bills that protect reproductive health freedom and establish common sense gun safety laws” (Ballotpedia). Lieber has consistently framed the walkout as a partisan tactic to block progressive legislation, emphasizing that “Oregonians deserve a functional democracy, not political gamesmanship” (OPB).

Dan Rayfield represents District 16, covering Corvallis, home to Oregon State University, and Philomath, areas known for education, research, and innovation. As House Speaker, Rayfield was involved in cross-chamber negotiations to resolve the walkout. He participated in the bipartisan leadership summit aimed at breaking the impasse, reflecting his reputation as a consensus-builder. Rayfield has said, “We have a responsibility to keep the doors of democracy open, even when it’s hard” (The Bulletin).

Julie Fahey’s District 14 covers parts of Eugene, a city known for its university culture, progressive activism, and environmental priorities. As House Majority Leader, Fahey was instrumental in passing a major housing package during the walkout-shortened session. She stated, “The work we accomplished over the last six months will make a real difference in the lives of Oregonians” (OPB). Fahey has consistently advocated for housing, tenant protections,

and social services, and was a key voice urging Republicans to return to work for the good of the state.

Khanh Pham represents District 36, which includes outer Southeast Portland, a diverse and rapidly growing area with a large immigrant and refugee population. Pham, the daughter of Vietnamese refugees, is known for her climate activism and advocacy for immigrant communities. During the 2023 walkout, she said, “This is part of a national pattern where Republicans have chosen to ignore democracy instead of winning over voters. Our rights, freedoms and liberties are not up for negotiation” (House Democrats Press Release). Pham’s district is recognized for its grassroots organizing and progressive values.

James Manning Jr. (D) represents District 7, which includes Junction City and North Eugene, areas that blend rural and urban interests. A retired Army veteran and former correctional officer, Manning has served as Senate President Pro Tempore since 2021. He was a vocal supporter of upholding legislative business during the walkout, stating, “We have a responsibility to do the people’s work. Walking out is not leadership” (OPB). Manning’s background in public service and his district’s mix of working-class and university communities inform his pragmatic approach.

Travis Nelson (D) represents District 44, a hub of diversity and progressive activism, home to many Black, immigrant, and working-class residents. A nurse and labor organizer, Nelson was outspoken during the walkout, warning, “Lives are at stake while we wait for Republicans to come back to work” (CityNews). He wore his nursing scrubs at rallies, emphasizing the urgent need to pass healthcare and public safety legislation.

In an interview for this study, Nelson noted that he was a chief sponsor of House Bill 2002, a central bill in the walkout. “I opposed the walkout. The main reason for the walkout was

some of the language in House Bill 2002. We were also looking at bringing a resolution that would have referred protections for LGBTQ+ marriage and our state to the ballot, and Republicans walked out to stop both pieces of legislation from moving” (Nelson). He recalled, “We had been hearing rumors that it might happen for a while, so I was disappointed but not surprised.”

Nelson was frank about the impact: “As a legislator who takes this work seriously, I was most concerned about my legislation and whether the good legislation I was proposing would make it across the finish line. I was concerned about the entire process coming to a halt and not having enough time to do the good work that is needed on behalf of all the Oregonians.” He acknowledged, “Republicans were successful in negotiating away parts of the original House bills...they were successful in completely derailing SGR 33...So, was it successful? Yes. But the concessions led to them getting back in the building and getting some things done that we needed to do as a legislative body.”

On public perception, Nelson said, “If you are from an area of Oregon that is more Republican, you viewed the walkouts as a good thing...Suppose you are somebody who is a Democrat or is more progressive in your thinking. In that case, you look at the walkouts as obstructionist and not collaborative or in alignment with the will of the people who sent legislators to Salem to work on their behalf and get work done.” He also critiqued the media: “I felt that they portrayed it just as a democratic, you know, another fight amongst Democrats and Republicans instead of really digging down into the reasons for the walkout and not reporting as thoroughly as they could have...on the fact that, you know, abortion and gay marriage were drivers for the Republican walkout” (Nelson).

Jeff Golden (D) of District 3 represents the Ashland and Medford area, known for its arts scene, higher education, and environmental activism. Golden, a former county commissioner and radio host, is a champion of campaign finance reform and climate policy. During the walkout, he argued, “The readability argument is a smokescreen. The real issue is opposition to reproductive rights and gun safety” (GovDelivery). Golden’s district values transparency, civic engagement, and progressive policy innovation.

In an interview for this study, Golden described the walkout as a “normalized” tactic that “seriously undermines democracy and really representative government where Oregonians elected a Democratic majority, and yet the minority exercises a veto power that in some ways puts them in control” (Golden). He acknowledged, “I can imagine a reverse situation where perhaps I’m in the minority, and I feel the legislation is going forward that so seriously contradicts my moral code and my belief system...that seems evil to me...if my only option to stop it is to walk out, I can imagine walking out. But it has become, that is a very high bar.”

Golden also offered a behind-the-scenes look at negotiations: “During the walkout, only a very few of us negotiated with the Republicans. That happened in kind of a formal sense. Behind closed doors, there were two or three of our members doing that. And we were asked not to do it on our own so as not to confuse the situation.” He described the “terrible precedent” set by rewarding hostage-taking: “If they hadn’t walked out, we could have said yes to some of their requests if they’d been requests instead of demands...But any concession would be done at the point of a gun.”

He also shared a revealing anecdote: “There are at least two, maybe more, Republican legislators who were faced with very serious recall threats for not walking out. It is not that they voted the wrong way. It is that they would not walk out and therefore let the process continue

such that a bill they do not like passed. To me, that is quite a statement of where we are at in the long-term impacts and walk-outs of people’s expectations. It is deeply concerning” (Golden).

Mark Gamba (D) represents District 41 and includes Milwaukie and Oak Grove, working-class suburbs with a strong tradition of labor and environmental activism. A former mayor and professional photographer, Gamba has prioritized climate action and housing. During the walkout, he said, “We have a climate crisis and a housing crisis. We cannot afford to let political games delay real solutions” (Oregon Legislature).

Tawna Sanchez (D) represents District 43, which covers North and Central Portland, areas with significant Native American and communities of color. As one of Oregon’s few Native American legislators, Sanchez is known for her advocacy on equity and criminal justice reform. During and after the 2023 walkout, she stated, “We need to address the root causes of inequality in Oregon, and that work can’t wait for political games to end” (Underscore News).

#### *Additional Actors & Stakeholders*

A wide range of Oregon organizations and stakeholder groups outside government officials were significantly impacted by, and responded to, the 2023 legislative walkout. Their statements and actions highlight the walkout’s real world effects on vulnerable communities, policy advocacy, and the state’s civic life.

Gordon Smith is a prominent Oregon political figure who served as an Oregon State Senator representing District 29 (Northeastern Oregon) and as President of the Oregon State Senate in the 1995 legislative session. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1996, serving until 2009. Smith’s legislative career is marked by his advocacy for rural issues, his emphasis on bipartisan compromise, and his experience navigating both state and federal legislative bodies. He has been vocal about the importance of checks and balances, the dangers of hyper-

partisanship, and the need for legislative processes that respect both majority rule and minority rights. Smith's perspective is shaped by his rural roots in Pendleton and his extensive experience in both state and national politics (Smith; Geni).

In an interview for this study, Gordon Smith brought a historical and institutional perspective to legislative protest in Oregon. Reflecting on his tenure, Smith said.

“I would say it was a better climate than it seems to exist today. It was less polarized... the founders of our republic cared more about our liberties than they did about the efficiency of government, which is why they created so many checks and balances and separations of power.

He described how both parties had used walkouts in the Oregon legislature, but always as a last resort to force compromise:

“There was one occasion... a large republican minority... staged a very brief walk out. And ultimately it resulted in the two leaders... working out a compromise which brought back a quorum so business could be conducted... the Democrats did a walk out on us... ultimately we persuaded them to come back, things were moderated, and we got on with a very efficient session” (Smith).

Smith contrasted Oregon's walkout dynamics with the U.S. Senate's filibuster, noting,

“There is no minority protection equivalent to a filibuster [in Oregon] and so what has been invented by both political parties... are walkouts which deny the existence of a quorum to proceed with business.” He warned that strict majoritarianism could result in “mob rule” and less durable law, arguing, “Some way to protect minority rights will ultimately resolve, I think, in better law, more durable law, and ultimately, a more unified state instead of the majority resembling mob rule and just imposing draconian solutions upon the minority in our state” (Smith).

On media coverage, Smith was critical, stating; “I would give the media a D grade because... journalism was much more a profession of integrity and less partisanship... now journalism is taking a backseat to partisanship...they lead with what bleeds and it doesn't always

equal the truth or wisdom.” He also commented on the evolution of constituent feedback, observing.

“In my time I always had the feeling that I would be judged most accurately by my constituency by what I accomplished and not by what I kill... now those that are nominated and elected, I feel more fear of being primary than defeated in the general election, and so they only give heed to the most extreme views of their ideology, and that has resulted in the breakdown of the legislative process” (Smith).

Smith concluded by advocating for reforms such as arbitration processes or limited filibusters to encourage compromise, stating.

“If they wanted to be thoughtful and listen more and talk less and demand less, but actually try to figure out a way to let the majority win, but with the wisdom overlay that can come with engagement of minority rights and views, that I think would be wise and would produce a legislative solutions to public problems that are less ideologically extreme” (Smith).

Ed Fitch is the mayor of Redmond, Oregon, a city known for its rapid growth, vibrant community spirit, and evolving infrastructure needs. Fitch has a long history of public service in Redmond, having previously served as city attorney for 19 years and as mayor from 1999 to 2001 before returning to the office. Beyond his mayoral duties, Fitch has chaired the Central Oregon Cities organization and remained deeply involved in local governance and legal affairs. His priorities have included addressing congestion on South Highway 97, diversifying Redmond’s housing inventory, and supporting the expansion of Central Oregon Community College’s Redmond campus. Fitch is recognized for his coalition-building approach and commitment to balanced community development, reflecting the pragmatic and moderately conservative values of his city (Fitch; KBND).

As mayor of Redmond, Ed Fitch offered a local government perspective on the 2023 Oregon legislative walkout. When asked about the walkout’s resonance in Redmond, Fitch noted, “I would say that I really wasn't a significant issue here.” He explained that the walkout’s

focus on social issues, rather than local government priorities, meant it had minimal direct impact on city operations or constituent concerns. Fitch observed, “Redmond is a fairly moderately conservative community, so some of the more... democratic left democratic proposals... most citizens in Redmond [were not] perceptible of.” He emphasized that the most tangible effect was the loss of legislative seniority for Senator Tim Knopp, which he described as “some actual diminution of clout in the legislature,” potentially impacting Central Oregon’s influence at the state level (Fitch).

Fitch expressed a nuanced view on walkouts as a political tool, stating, “I do agree that a walkout may be appropriate if there is some extreme measure that is being considered... So, it depends.” He compared legislative walkouts to civil rights protests, suggesting that accepting consequences is part of principled dissent: “When you compare this to the protests... back in the sixties, people got arrested. That was a consequence. The consequence of this is you lose your seats. Maybe not as bad as you getting arrested... so you just got to accept that consequence.” Looking ahead, he predicted that Measure 113 would deter future walkouts: “I think it will stop walkouts, because most legislators do not want to give up their seat. I think that will be the effect” (Fitch).

On the broader political climate, Fitch remarked, “Having one party control the state government for a long time is not healthy for the state, whether it is Democrat or Republican. We are hardly operating as a two-party system in the state. And that is a problem.” He advocated for a more balanced state government and suggested that local governments should prepare for rare walkouts but not expect them to become the norm due to new deterrents (Fitch).

One of the most prominent coalitions to speak out was a group of more than thirty leading human service providers, food systems, and community-based organizations, including

the *Oregon Food Bank*. These groups issued a public letter urging legislators to end the walkout, emphasizing the harm caused to Oregonians facing hunger, poverty, and homelessness. Their statement read, “We are increasingly concerned with the impact the ongoing stall tactics will have on our communities,” and they called on lawmakers to “return to the capitol, find common ground and get to work on critical statewide issues” (Oregon Food Bank). The coalition’s concern was rooted in the legislative session’s looming end, with vital funding and policy decisions for struggling Oregonians at risk of being abandoned due to the impasse.

Gun safety advocacy groups were also deeply engaged. *Moms Demand Action* and *Students Demand Action*, both parts of *Everytown for Gun Safety*’s grassroots network, were highly active during the session. They organized rallies, sent more than 16,000 advocacy emails to lawmakers, and issued strong statements after the walkout ended. Hilary Uhlig, Oregon chapter leader of *Moms Demand Action*, said.

“The deliberate obstructionism displayed by Republicans as they catered to the gun-lobby and other extreme groups, attempted to deprive Oregon families a safer future from gun violence. But we are not going anywhere, and we will ensure voters remember their shameful actions” (Everytown).

The walkout forced Democrats to negotiate amendments to the gun safety omnibus bill, but gun violence prevention advocates celebrated the eventual passage of a ban on ghost guns and new funding for community violence intervention.

Labor organizations also responded to the walkout’s effects on workers and legislative priorities. For example, a major Oregon workers’ union, frustrated by legislative inaction and the uncertainty caused by the walkout, initiated a recall campaign against a Democratic lawmaker over a sidelined bill. In a letter, the union’s leader wrote.

“It is clear that we cannot bank on the Legislative Assembly at large to have the best interests of our members at heart — to say nothing of the fact that the

Legislature cannot even say with certainty whether it will be functioning in the foreseeable future!”

This sentiment underscores how the walkout eroded trust not only in partisan actors but in the institution’s ability to serve working Oregonians (OPB).

The *Hold Politicians Accountable* coalition was one of the most influential grassroots campaigns to emerge in response to repeated legislative walkouts in Oregon. This group formed in direct reaction to the increasing frequency of legislative walkouts, particularly those that stalled action on critical issues like school funding, public safety, climate change, and housing. The coalition was broad and included major organizations such as the *Oregon Education Association (OEA)*, *Service Employees International Union (SEIU)*, *Oregon AFSCME*, *Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV)*, *Cascade AIDS Project*, *Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)*, and *Fair Shot for All Oregon*, among others (Our Oregon; SEIU Oregon). These groups argued that walkouts hurt all Oregonians by halting progress on urgent issues from education and wildfire relief to COVID response and affordable housing. Their campaign materials stated, “When regular people refuse to show up to work, there is a good chance we would lose our jobs. If a politician does not want to show up to do the job they were elected to do, there should be real consequences for them as well” (Our Oregon). OEA President Reed Scott-Schwalbach added, “It is long past time that there were rules in place to make sure politicians show up to do their jobs. The *Hold Politicians Accountable* measure will make sure that there are finally consequences for politicians who violate their oath of office and desert their posts (Ballotpedia).

*SEIU Oregon State Council* was a particularly vocal supporter, emphasizing that Measure 113 was “simple” and “holds politicians accountable by prohibiting legislators with 10 or more unexcused absences from votes in the Capitol from keeping their seat after the next election”

(SEIU Oregon). Their messaging drew a clear parallel between the expectations for everyday workers and elected officials, arguing, “If you did not show up for your job, you would get fired. Not a promotion” (SEIU Oregon).

Beyond this coalition, other accountability-focused organizations like *Common Cause Oregon* and the *League of Women Voters of Oregon* have also worked to hold legislators accountable, supporting reforms for transparency, campaign finance, and redistricting. These groups have long advocated for structural reforms to ensure Oregon’s government remains open, honest, and responsive to voters, and they supported efforts to limit the power of walkouts to derail the legislative process (Common Cause Oregon; Ballotpedia).

*Summary: Policy, Motivations, Data, and Contradictions*

The 2023 Oregon Senate walkout stands as a stark illustration of how deep ideological, cultural, and procedural divides can paralyze a state’s legislative process. At its core, the walkout was not a reaction to a single bill or procedural dispute, but rather a culmination of years of growing polarization between Oregon’s urban and rural constituencies, and a flashpoint in the national culture wars over abortion, transgender rights, and gun policy (Clucas et al. 5).

The immediate catalyst for the walkout was a package of Democratic bills, most notably HB 2002, which expanded abortion rights and gender-affirming care, and HB 2005, a gun safety measure. HB 2002 allowed minors to access abortion and gender-affirming care without mandatory parental notification in certain cases, while HB 2005 sought to ban “ghost guns” and initially proposed raising the age for purchasing semiautomatic rifles (PBS; KNKX).

Republicans argued these measures were “too extreme,” particularly objecting to the lack of parental notification and perceived threats to Second Amendment rights (East Oregonian). They also cited a procedural concern: that bill summaries did not meet Oregon’s statutory readability

requirements (ORS 171.134). However, the timing and rhetoric of the walkout do allow the argument that the real motivation was to block these social policy bills (PBS).

Democrats, by contrast, saw HB 2002 and HB 2005 as essential to safeguarding reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights, especially considering national rollbacks, and rising anti-trans legislation in other states. They argued the walkout was an abdication of democratic responsibility and a violation of the will of voters, especially after the passage of Measure 113, which was designed to deter such tactics by disqualifying legislators with 10 or more unexcused absences from running for office in the next term (OPB).

To review, the walkout lasted 42 days, the longest in Oregon history and the second-longest in U.S. state legislative history (PBS). By denying the Senate its two-thirds quorum (20 of 30 senators), Republicans and one Independent halted over two hundred bills, including the state's two-year budget, major housing and mental health initiatives, and funding for hundreds of local projects (East Oregonian). Oregon's unique quorum rule, one of only four in the nation requiring two-thirds rather than a simple majority, made this tactic possible and has contributed to Oregon's status as the state with the most frequent legislative walkouts in recent years (Clucas et al. 11).

A central contradiction emerged between the stated and actual motivations for the walkout. While Republicans claimed procedural fairness as the trigger, the focus on abortion, gender-affirming care, and gun safety was unmistakable (PBS; KNKX). This is further complicated because the readability law had never previously triggered a walkout, and the protest coincided precisely with the legislative calendar for these contentious social policy bills (OPB).

Another contradiction lay in the political calculus of the walkout. Measure 113, passed by 68% of Oregon voters in 2022, including majorities in most rural counties explicitly barred legislators with ten or more unexcused absences from seeking office in the next term (Ballotpedia). Despite this, nine Republican senators and one independent chose to walk out, directly contravening the will of their own constituents. Their subsequent legal challenge to Measure 113 was unanimously rejected by the Oregon Supreme Court, which ruled that the disqualification applied immediately following the term in which the absences occurred (KATU).

The walkout ended only after Democrats agreed to significant compromises after making profuse arguments against concessions. On HB 2002, they amended the parental notification provision: now, if a provider believes notifying parents is not in the best interest of a patient under fifteen, a second provider must concur, unless there is a risk of abuse or neglect (KNKX). On gun safety, Democrats dropped the proposed age increase for semiautomatic rifle purchases but retained the ban on “ghost guns” (KNKX). These concessions allowed the Senate to regain a quorum, pass the budget, and move forward with delayed legislation (East Oregonian).

From the Republican perspective, the walkout was a principled stand against what they viewed as the overreach of a one-party urban majority, a defense of parental rights, and a last-resort tactic to force negotiation on bills they believed would irreparably harm their communities (East Oregonian). They argued that the two-thirds quorum rule exists precisely to ensure that the minority cannot be steamrolled and that their walkout was a constitutional protest, not an abdication of responsibility (OPB).

From the Democratic perspective, the walkout was an undemocratic maneuver that subverted the will of the majority and undermined the legislative process. They pointed to the

overwhelming passage of Measure 113 as evidence that Oregonians wanted to end the era of legislative obstruction and restore accountability (Ballotpedia). Democrats also noted that, despite initial claims of non-negotiability, they made policy concessions to ensure the passage of the budget and other critical bills, demonstrating a willingness to compromise, but only after significant disruption and public cost (East Oregonian).

The walkout's impact was far-reaching: it delayed over two hundred bills, jeopardized record funding for education and mental health, and left local projects in limbo (East Oregonian). It also deepened the rural-urban divide, with rural legislators arguing that their communities' values were being overridden by urban majorities, a theme capitalized on by the media, with a divide rooted in decades of economic, demographic, and cultural change (Clucas et al. 15). Yet, even in rural counties, voters had recently supported Measure 113, suggesting frustration with legislative obstruction as well as with progressive policy (Ballotpedia).

The 2023 walkout was not beneficial to the state of Oregon and exposed the limits of both majoritarian rule and minority obstruction. The enforcement of Measure 113 may deter future walkouts, but it also risks further marginalizing dissenting voices and reinforcing polarization. Walkouts should not be a tool for future vilifying and acting as an excuse for neglecting to work with the people who make Oregon so diverse. The fact that both parties compromised, despite initial claims of non-negotiability demonstrates that, even in an era of gridlock, negotiation remains possible, but only after significant disruption and public cost (East Oregonian; Clucas et al. 22). Instead, negotiation should be sought after for the potential good it can cause, rather than exhausting others to the point where both admit defeat.

## **Oregon Case Study 2: The 2001 Oregon House Walkout**

In June 2001, Oregon's political climate was dramatically reshaped by an event that would set the tone for legislative conflicts in the decades to come: a walkout by 25 Democratic members of the Oregon House of Representatives. This was not simply a protest; it was a calculated maneuver to prevent Republicans from passing a redistricting plan that, in the Democrats' view, would unfairly lock in GOP legislative dominance for years. The repercussions of this action reverberated far beyond the immediate fight, altering the trajectory of Oregon's political processes and setting a precedent for future walkouts (KVAL; Ballotpedia).

At the time, Republicans controlled the Oregon House with thirty two seats out of sixty, while Democrats held twenty seven and there was one Independent. The quorum requirement was forty members, meaning Democrats could block business by withholding just eight votes (Ballotpedia). The stakes were heightened by the fact that the redistricting plan was being advanced as a resolution, not a bill, a move that would bypass the veto power of Democratic Governor John Kitzhaber. This meant Republicans, if unimpeded, could cement their electoral advantage without executive oversight ("Noteworthy State Legislative Walkouts," Ballotpedia).

Democrats saw the GOP's redistricting plan as a blatant attempt to manipulate electoral boundaries. Speaker Mark Simmons, representing the Republican majority, argued, "We are here to protect the voters of Oregon, not to allow the system to be hijacked for partisan gain," framing the walkout as a defense of the state's democratic principles (Clucas 1066). On the other side, Republican leaders like Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli accused Democrats of dereliction: "We are here to govern, not to stall" ("Republicans Walkout," Oregon Senate).

On June 26, 2001, 25 House Democrats withheld their presence from the Capitol, denying the Republicans the 40-member quorum needed to conduct business. The walkout lasted

five days, during which time Republicans issued legal summons and scrambled to bring the absent Democrats back to the floor, but the minority held firm (KGW News). With the June 30 deadline for redistricting looming, the absence of a quorum meant the resolution could not pass. As a result, the responsibility for redrawing the districts shifted to Democratic Secretary of State Bill Bradbury, who oversaw the process. Congressional boundaries were drawn by a panel of judges, and the Republican plan was effectively derailed (“Noteworthy State Legislative Walkouts,” Ballotpedia; FairVote).

The political implications were immediate and far-reaching. Democrats saw the walkout as a hard-fought victory for fair representation. Representative Mike Schaufler, a key figure in the walkout, emphasized, “We were not just blocking a redistricting plan; we were defending the integrity of the voting process” (Clucas 1067). Republicans, on the other hand, saw the move as cynical obstruction. “When does this end? When do we stop pretending that government is a game?” Ferrioli asked, highlighting the deepening partisan divide (“Republicans Walkout,” Oregon Senate).

Beyond the immediate outcome, the 2001 walkout marked a turning point in Oregon’s political culture, signaling the rise of procedural tactics as a primary means of resistance. Political scientist Richard Clucas called it a “watershed moment” that would set the stage for future confrontations, including the high-profile walkouts of 2019 and 2023 (Clucas 1065). The event demonstrated that traditional governance could be sidestepped in favor of more confrontational, disruptive tactical lessons both parties would revisit. As former Republican Senator Jason Atkinson later put it, “The only thing Republicans have to make their voice heard is deny a quorum,” a strategy learned directly from the Democrats’ 2001 playbook (OPB).

The 2001 walkout was a dramatic demonstration of Oregon’s increasingly divergent political philosophies. For Democrats, it was about defending democracy itself; for Republicans, it was an obstructionist tactic undermining the legislative process. Yet, both sides recognized it as a critical turning point. Simmons insisted, “Fair representation should be about the voters, not about manipulating the lines for political advantage” (Clucas 1066). Ferrioli, meanwhile, warned, “This is not the way to govern” (“Republicans Walkout,” Oregon Senate).

In retrospect, the 2001 Oregon legislative walkout stands as a reminder of how far lawmakers are willing to go to assert their vision of democracy. It secured a win for Democrats in the moment but, more importantly, set a precedent for procedural brinkmanship that continues to shape Oregon’s legislative landscape. As polarization deepens, the central question remains: how far can one party go before the entire legislative process breaks down?

### **Oregon Case Study 3: The 2019 Oregon Senate Walkout**

The 2019 Oregon Senate walkout marked another watershed moment in the state’s political history, highlighting the power of procedural tactics in a deeply polarized environment. On June 20, 2019, all 11 Republican members of the Oregon State Senate staged a walkout, effectively shutting down deliberations on House Bill 2020 (HB 2020), a highly contentious cap-and-trade climate bill (; Ballotpedia). At the time, the Senate had 18 Democrats and 12 Republicans (one seat was vacant), and twenty senators were required for a quorum. Without the Republicans, Democrats could not proceed with legislative business (“Noteworthy State Legislative Walkouts,” Ballotpedia).

HB 2020 was a cornerstone of Oregon Democrats’ climate agenda, aiming to cap greenhouse gas emissions from major polluters and establish a market for trading emission permits. Governor Kate Brown and legislative leaders argued the bill was essential for meeting

Oregon’s climate goals and transitioning to renewable energy (Oregon Senate; ). However, Republicans, led by Senate Leader Herman Baertschiger Jr., saw the bill as a threat to rural economies, arguing it would increase energy costs, harm industries like agriculture and forestry, and disproportionately impact their constituents (“Oregon Senate Republicans Protest Cap-and-Trade Bill”; ).

The walkout lasted nine days, during which the absent senators fled to Idaho and Montana to avoid being compelled back to the Capitol by state police, whom Governor Brown had ordered to retrieve them (Coffman; ). This out-of-state flight underscored the lengths to which Republicans were willing to go to block HB 2020. The standoff escalated further when militia groups threatened to intervene on the Republicans’ behalf, prompting a temporary closure of the Capitol for safety reasons (; Wikipedia).

Throughout the walkout, Republicans insisted that the climate bill should be referred to voters as a ballot initiative rather than being decided by a legislative majority. Baertschiger argued, “We believe that the people of Oregon should have a say in this process, not just a handful of lawmakers in Salem” (“Oregon Senate Republicans Protest Cap-and-Trade Bill”). Governor Brown, for her part, refused to negotiate until Republicans returned, stating, “I will not negotiate with people who are unwilling to show up and do their jobs” (“Oregon Senate Republicans Protest Cap-and-Trade Bill”).

The walkout succeeded in its immediate aim: on June 25, Senate President Peter Courtney announced that HB 2020 lacked sufficient support among Democrats and would not advance that session (Coffman; ). The Republican senators returned on June 29, just before the session’s end, but the bill was effectively dead. The walkout delayed or jeopardized more than

one hundred other bills, including measures on paid family leave, campaign finance reform, and affordable housing (LA Times; KGW News).

The impact of the 2019 Senate walkout was profound. It demonstrated the power of Oregon’s two-thirds quorum rule—one of only four such rules in the nation—and set a precedent for future walkouts, including those in 2020 and 2023 (Ballotpedia). The episode also exposed the deepening rural-urban divide, with rural Republicans framing the protest as a defense of their way of life, and urban Democrats viewing it as an abdication of legislative responsibility (KLCC; Henkels and Steel 103). The event became a national touchstone for debates over minority rights, legislative obstruction, and the legitimacy of walkouts as a political tool (“Noteworthy State Legislative Walkouts,” Ballotpedia).

#### **Oregon Case Study 4: The 2019 Oregon House Walkout**

Earlier in 2019, Oregon House Republicans orchestrated their own walkout, this time to block a \$2 billion education tax package, House Bill 3427, which would have funded K-12 education through a new commercial activities tax (Ballotpedia). The House, with 38 Democrats and 22 Republicans, requires forty members for a quorum. By walking out, Republicans denied the necessary quorum and brought legislative business to a halt (“Noteworthy State Legislative Walkouts,” Ballotpedia).

House Republican Leader Mike McLane led the protest, arguing that the tax bill would impose devastating economic harm on Oregon families and businesses, especially in rural areas. “This bill would cause devastating economic harm to families in Oregon, particularly those in rural areas,” McLane stated, framing the walkout as a stand for constituents who would withstand the worst of the bill’s consequences (Henkels and Steel 103). The walkout lasted four

days, during which Democrats and Governor Brown negotiated with Republicans to bring them back to the Capitol (Ballotpedia).

The resolution involved significant compromise. Democrats agreed to table two controversial bills—one on gun control (SB 978) and another on vaccine exemptions (HB 3063)—and to “reset” the cap-and-trade bill (HB 2020), which was still pending in the Senate. In exchange, Republicans promised not to walk out again during the session (Ballotpedia). The deal allowed the House to move forward with the education funding package but set the stage for the more high-profile Senate walkout over climate policy just weeks later (KGW News; Ballotpedia).

The 2019 House walkout, like its Senate counterpart, underscored the growing willingness of minority parties in Oregon to use procedural tactics to block legislation they oppose. It also highlighted the deepening divide between urban and rural lawmakers, with Republicans arguing that the Democratic agenda failed to account for the economic realities of rural Oregon (Henkels and Steel 103; Ballotpedia). The episode foreshadowed the legislative gridlock and polarization that would come to define Oregon politics in the following years (“Noteworthy State Legislative Walkouts,” Ballotpedia).

### **Oregon Case Study 5: The 2020 Oregon House Walkout**

In early 2020, Oregon’s political landscape was once again upended by a coordinated walkout. This time involving both House and Senate Republicans, and aimed at blocking Senate Bill 1530, known as the “Clean Energy Jobs Bill” or cap-and-trade legislation (Ballotpedia; OPB). The bill was a centerpiece of the Democratic climate agenda, designed to cap statewide carbon emissions, require polluters to purchase allowances, and invest the proceeds in clean

energy and climate resilience. Supporters argued that SB 1530 would position Oregon as a national leader in climate action, while critics warned it would devastate rural economies by raising fuel prices and increasing costs for industries like timber and agriculture (KATU; OPB).

The House Republican caucus, led by Minority Leader Christine Drahan, argued that the bill would disproportionately harm small businesses, farmers, and rural communities. Drahan stated, “We are standing up for the people who will suffer the most—small businesses, farmers, and rural communities” (“Oregon House Republicans Protest Cap-and-Trade”). The walkout began in late February and lasted several weeks, effectively denying the House a quorum and bringing all legislative business to a halt (Ballotpedia; OPB). The timing was particularly notable, as the walkout unfolded during the preliminary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, further complicating legislative operations and raising the stakes for urgent budget and emergency response bills (OPB).

The consequences were sweeping. More than one hundred bills died because of the walkout, including measures to strengthen gun laws, create an independent public records advocate, and declare a statewide homelessness emergency. Several budget bills were also left unresolved, carving out money to address Oregon’s mental health and foster care crises (OPB). Senate President Peter Courtney, a Democrat, warned, “I guarantee you other states are going to start copying this and that’s how dangerous this is,” highlighting the precedent setting nature of the tactic (OPB).

The walkout ended only after Democratic leaders agreed to temporarily shelve the cap-and-trade bill, a move that left climate activists frustrated, and rural Republicans emboldened (OPB; Ballotpedia). The episode underscored the deepening rural-urban divide, with rural lawmakers and their constituents arguing that climate policy was being crafted without regard for

their economic realities, and urban Democrats insisting that bold action was needed to address the climate crisis (KATU; OPB; Ballotpedia). The 2020 walkout cemented the use of quorum-denial as a recurring minority tool in Oregon and raised earnest questions about the future functionality of the state legislature (OPB; Ballotpedia).

### **Oregon Case Study 6: The 2021 Oregon Senate Walkout**

In 2021, Oregon Republicans again staged a walkout, this time in the Senate, over a package of voting rights bills. The legislation included measures to expand absentee voting, implement automatic voter registration, and allow same-day voter registration, all parts of a broader Democratic effort to increase access to the ballot (Ballotpedia). Republican senators, led by Senate Minority Leader Fred Girod, objected to these bills, arguing that they would erode election integrity and open the door to voter fraud. Girod warned, “This is an attempt to erode the integrity of our elections,” and described the proposed changes as a “free-for-all” that would undermine public trust in the electoral process (“Oregon Republicans Oppose Voting Rights Bill”).

The walkout was brief compared to previous actions, but it highlighted the intensifying national debate over voting rights and election security. Democrats, for their part, argued that the bills were necessary to modernize Oregon’s voting system and ensure that every eligible voter could participate, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide efforts to restrict voting access (Ballotpedia). Despite the walkout, the Democratic majority passed the voting rights package, underscoring the limits of the minority’s power when the majority is determined to advance its legislative agenda (Ballotpedia).

The 2021 walkout further illustrated the growing reliance on procedural maneuvers in Oregon’s legislature and the increasing polarization over core democratic processes. While the

Republican protest failed to block the voting rights bills, it reinforced the pattern of walkouts as a go to strategy for legislative minorities in the state, regardless of the policy issue at stake (Ballotpedia).

### **Texas Case Study 1: The 2003 Texas Senate Walkout**

The 2003 Texas Senate walkout remains one of the most dramatic and consequential legislative protests in modern American politics. That year, Texas Republicans, led by Governor Rick Perry and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, pushed for a mid-decade redistricting plan designed to maximize Republican representation in Congress, a move that Democrats saw as an unprecedented and deeply partisan gerrymander (Texas Tribune, “Texas Democrats’ decampment”; Wikipedia, “2003 Texas redistricting”).

The conflict began in May, when more than 50 House Democrats decamped to Ardmore, Oklahoma, denying the House the 100-member quorum needed to pass the redistricting maps during the regular session (Business Insider; Texas Tribune, “When Texas House Democrats Wanted to Derail”). The House walkout lasted four days, stalling the process and drawing national attention. When Governor Perry called a special session to revive the plan, 11 Senate Democrats, dubbed the “Texas 11” fled to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in July, where they remained for 46 days to block the Senate from reaching its 21-member quorum (Business Insider; Wikipedia, “Texas Eleven”).

These walkouts were not only logistically complex, requiring lawmakers to leave the state to avoid being compelled back by Texas law enforcement but also highly publicized. Democrats held press conferences from their out-of-state refuges, coordinated legal strategies, and drew support from national Democratic leaders and activists (Texas Tribune, “Texas Democrats’ decampment;” WFAA). Senator Rodney Ellis of Houston, a leader of the protest,

called the plan “the most partisan, the most unfair gerrymandering you have ever seen” (Texas Monthly, qtd. in Texas Tribune, “Texas Democrats’ decampment”). Republicans, meanwhile, denounced the Democrats as “cowards” and “The Chicken D’s,” with Speaker Tom Craddick declaring, “It’s not a disgrace to stand and fight, but it is a disgrace to run and hide” (Texas Tribune, “Is This a Permanent Condition?”).

The standoff ended in September when Senator John Whitmire returned to Austin, restoring the quorum and allowing Republicans to pass the new congressional maps (Business Insider; Wikipedia, “Texas Eleven”). The redistricting plan was subsequently challenged in court, culminating in the Supreme Court’s 2006 decision in *League of United Latin American Citizens v. Perry*, which upheld most of the new map but found that one district (TX-23) had violated the Voting Rights Act by diluting Latino voting power (Wikipedia, “2003 Texas redistricting”; MALDEF testimony). The 2004 elections under the new lines saw Republicans win a majority of Texas’s U.S. House seats for the first time since Reconstruction, shifting the state’s congressional delegation from 17-15 Democratic to 21-11 Republican (Wikipedia, “2003 Texas redistricting”).

The 2003 walkouts set a national precedent for minority-party protest, demonstrating the power and limits of quorum-denial as a tool of legislative resistance. They also underscored the escalating partisan polarization over redistricting, voting rights, and the basic rules of democratic engagement (Texas Tribune, “Texas Democrats’ decampment;” Business Insider).

### **Texas Case Study 2: The 2021 Texas House Walkout**

In 2021, Texas Democrats again resorted to a walkout, this time in the House, to block the passage of Senate Bill 7, a sweeping Republican-backed voting bill that would have imposed some of the nation’s strictest voting restrictions (OPB; PBS NewsHour). The bill included

provisions to limit mail-in voting, ban drive-thru voting, reduce polling hours, and empower partisan poll watchers, measures that Democrats and civil rights groups argued would disproportionately suppress turnout among voters of color (PBS NewsHour; Texas Tribune, “Who is Chris Turner”).

On the final night of the regular session, nearly all 67 House Democrats walked out of the chamber before midnight, leaving Republicans without the 100-member quorum needed to pass SB 7 (The 19th; PBS NewsHour). Democratic State Rep. Chris Turner, who led the walkout, explained, “This is about protecting the freedom to vote for all Texans” (Dallas Morning News; Texas Tribune, “Who is Chris Turner”). The walkout forced Republicans to abandon the bill for that session, prompting Governor Greg Abbott to call a special session to revive the legislation (PBS NewsHour).

The walkout was widely covered in the national media and became a rallying point for voting rights advocates. Democrats used the spotlight to urge Congress and President Biden to pass federal voting rights protections (PBS NewsHour; The 19th). However, the victory was temporary: after multiple special sessions and another high-profile quorum break in July when more than 50 Democrats fled to Washington, D.C. Republicans ultimately passed a modified version of the voting bill, SB 1, in September 2021 (Texas Tribune, “Texas voting bill signed into law”; Ballotpedia). The new law faces ongoing legal challenges from civil rights groups, who argue it will disproportionately burden voters of color and voters with disabilities (Texas Tribune, “Texas voting bill signed into law”).

The 2021 walkout exemplified the use of quorum-denial as a strategic tool to fight policies perceived as harmful to democracy and voting rights, while also highlighting the limits of such tactics in the face of determined legislative majorities (OPB; Ballotpedia).

### **Texas Case Study 3: The 2022 Texas House Walkout**

In 2022, Texas Democrats staged another walkout, this time to protest House Bill 25, which restricted transgender students' participation in K-12 sports according to the sex listed on their birth certificate at or near birth (ABC13; Fox26 Houston). The bill, authored by Republican Rep. Valoree Swanson, was part of a broader wave of anti-transgender legislation across the country. Democrats, including Rep. Ann Johnson, vocally opposed the bill, arguing it was discriminatory and harmful to transgender youth. Johnson stated, "Transgender kids need our support, not politicians using them as pawns in a culture war" (Texas Tribune, "What's at stake in Texas").

The walkout was part of a series of procedural and protest maneuvers by Democrats and LGBTQ+ advocates, who also delayed debate and staged demonstrations in the House gallery (Washington Examiner). Despite these efforts, HB 25 passed the House by a 76-54 vote and was signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott in October 2021, going into effect in January 2022 (Fox26 Houston; ABC13). The law went further than previous UIL rules by requiring students to compete based on their birth certificate, regardless of legal gender changes (Fox26 Houston).

The 2022 walkout and related protests underscored the ongoing partisan divide in Texas politics, particularly on issues of LGBTQ+ rights, and demonstrated how walkouts can become central to the political discourse, especially when civil rights are at stake (Texas Tribune, "What's at stake in Texas"; ABC13)

### **Indiana Case Study 1: The 2011 Indiana House Walkout**

The 2011 Indiana House walkout was one of the longest and most consequential legislative protests in recent U.S. history. On February 22, 2011, nearly all Democratic members of the Indiana House of Representatives, except three, fled to Illinois to deny the Republican

majority a quorum, blocking a vote on a controversial “right-to-work” bill that would have prohibited union contracts from requiring workers to pay union dues (Wikipedia, “2011 Indiana legislative walkouts”). The Indiana House requires a two-thirds quorum (67 of 100 members) to conduct business, and with 60 Democrats, Republicans could not proceed without at least some Democratic presence (Ballotpedia; Labor Notes).

The walkout lasted six weeks, far longer than most previous Indiana legislative protests (Wikipedia, “2011 Indiana legislative walkouts”). Democrats argued that the right-to-work bill would undermine organized labor and hurt working families, with Rep. Scott Pelath stating, “We have made our point. This is not what people want. This bill will only divide us” (Pelath, Indianapolis Star; Ballotpedia). The protest drew thousands of union members and supporters to the Statehouse, echoing the concurrent mass protests in Wisconsin (Labor Notes; Michigan Public Radio).

Republicans responded by fining absent lawmakers \$250 per day and withholding their pay, sanctions later upheld by the Indiana Supreme Court (Indianapolis Business Journal). Governor Mitch Daniels, while supportive of right-to-work in principle, urged Republicans to drop the bill for that session, noting it was not part of their election platform and deserved more public debate (Wikipedia, “2011 Indiana legislative walkouts”). The standoff ended on March 28, 2011, after Republicans agreed to table the right-to-work bill and two other contentious measures, though a major school voucher bill remained on the agenda (Christian Science Monitor; Wikipedia, “2011 Indiana legislative walkouts”). In total, missing members were fined about \$3,500 each (Wikipedia, “2011 Indiana legislative walkouts”).

Despite Democrats’ efforts, Indiana enacted right-to-work the following year, becoming the first Rust Belt state in a decade to do so (Michigan Public Radio). The 2011 walkout

highlighted the deep partisan divide over labor rights and the increasing use of walkouts as a legislative tool in Indiana (Ballotpedia; Labor Notes).

### **Rhode Island Case Study 1: The 2007 Rhode Island House Walkout**

The 2007 Rhode Island House walkout was a rare but notable protest proposed budget cuts to education and healthcare and shows how walkouts can be used even in states with a simple-majority quorum requirement. In Rhode Island, a quorum is defined as a majority of the chamber's members, which typically allows the majority party to conduct business without minority support (Ballotpedia; Wikipedia, "Quorum"). However, in 2007, a faction of Democratic lawmakers protested Republican Governor Donald Carcieri's budget proposal, which they argued would cut funding for critical social services like education and healthcare (Providence Journal; Ballotpedia). Led by Democratic lawmakers, the walkout was in response to Republican Governor Donald Carcieri's budget, which they argued would disproportionately harm vulnerable communities (Providence Journal; Ballotpedia). Representative Michael Marcello summed up the sentiment: "This budget does not prioritize the people of Rhode Island" ("Rhode Island Budget Protest," Providence Journal).

Because Democrats held the majority, the walkout was not about the minority party denying a quorum, but rather about dissent within the majority itself. By refusing to participate, these lawmakers temporarily dropped attendance below the quorum threshold, stalling legislative business and drawing public attention to their cause. Representative Michael Marcello stated, "This budget does not prioritize the people of Rhode Island," emphasizing the protest's focus on social welfare (Providence Journal). Although the budget passed, the walkout demonstrated that even in majoritarian systems, coordinated protest by a determined bloc can disrupt proceedings

and force negotiation, especially when the majority is internally divided (Ballotpedia; Providence Journal).

### **Wisconsin Case Study 1: The 2011 Wisconsin Senate Walkout**

The 2011 Wisconsin Senate walkout was among the most high-profile and impactful legislative protests in U.S. history. In February 2011, all 14 Democratic state senators fled to Illinois to deny the Republican majority a quorum needed to pass Governor Scott Walker's "Budget Repair Bill," which aimed to strip most collective bargaining rights from public sector employees (NPR; Wikipedia, "2011 Wisconsin protests"). The bill, known as Act 10, also increased employee contributions to pensions and health care, and required annual union recertification votes (Peoples World; Wisconsin Public Radio).

The walkout lasted over three weeks, during which time Madison became the epicenter of massive protests, at one point drawing more than 100,000 demonstrators to the Capitol (Wisconsin Public Radio; Peoples World). Senate Minority Leader Mark Miller stated, "We are standing up for working families who are under attack" (New York Times; PRWatch). The protest inspired solidarity rallies nationwide and led to recall elections for several state senators and an unsuccessful recall of Governor Walker himself (Wikipedia, "2011 Wisconsin protests"; ISReview).

Despite the walkout and protests, Republicans passed Act 10 by separating its fiscal and non-fiscal components, allowing them to bypass the quorum requirement. The law's passage marked a turning point for public sector unions in Wisconsin, effectively ending most collective bargaining rights and leading to a sharp decline in union membership and influence (Wisconsin Public Radio; The Real News Network).

The Wisconsin walkout remains a defining moment in the national debate over labor rights, demonstrating both the power and the limits of legislative walkouts as a tool of protest and public mobilization (Ballotpedia; ISReview).

### **Michigan Case Study 1: The 2024 Michigan House Walkout**

In December 2024, Michigan House Republicans staged a high-profile walkout during the final days of the legislative session, protesting the Democratic majority's refusal to bring up bills on road funding, paid sick leave, and the minimum wage for tipped workers (Michigan Public; Bridge Michigan; Fox17). House Minority Leader and Speaker-elect Matt Hall led the walkout, criticizing Democrats for "wasting everyone's time" with late-night sessions and refusing to negotiate on core Republican priorities. "We are not doing anything serious here anyway. I mean, we will just stand around for the next eight hours and then they will put up some bill that, you know, what will it do? It'll do something that nobody even cares about. You know, it will be like defining the state mouse," Hall said at a press conference, underscoring the frustration and sense of legislative gridlock (Michigan Public).

The Republican caucus delivered an ultimatum: they would not return to the chamber until Democrats agreed to vote on preserving the tipped wage and modifying sick leave rules, both of which were set to change under a recent court order (Bridge Michigan; Fox17). Democrats, who still held a slim majority in the lame-duck session, continued to advance unrelated bills, including legislation to deter online threats, but the absence of Republicans made it impossible to move forward on more contentious issues (Bridge Michigan). The standoff was further complicated when a Democrat joined Republicans in skipping the session, leaving the House without enough members to hold votes, and effectively killing all bills on the agenda for the day (PBS).

The walkout highlighted the deep partisan divisions that had come to define Michigan's legislature in 2024. It also underscored the strategic use of quorum-denial as a bargaining tool, even in a chamber where the majority party is typically able to control the agenda. As House Speaker Pro Tem Laurie Pohutsky noted, "Everything that was on the agenda today in the House is dead. And the fifty-five members that did not attend should feel free to own it" (PBS). The episode capped a tumultuous year for Michigan Democrats, who lost their House majority in the November elections and faced internal divisions and public criticism for legislative inaction (PBS).

### **Minnesota Case Study 1: The 2025 Minnesota House Walkout**

In January 2025, Minnesota's legislative session opened in unprecedented chaos as House Democrats staged a walkout to deny Republicans a quorum and block them from leveraging a temporary majority to seize control of the chamber (NBC News; KNSI Radio; KFGO; WTOP News). The November 2024 elections produced a 67-67 tie in the House, but a judge's ruling vacated a Democrat's victory in District 40B due to a residency challenge, giving Republicans a 67-66 edge until a special election could be held on January 28 (KNSI Radio; Star Tribune).

Democrats, led by former Speaker Melissa Hortman, refused to attend the opening session, arguing that the state constitution requires a quorum of sixty-eight members to conduct business and that the House could not legally operate with only 67 Republicans present (WTOP News; NBC News). Republicans, led by Lisa Demuth, countered that a simple majority of seated members was sufficient and proceeded to elect Demuth as speaker and appoint committee chairs in a sparsely attended, legally disputed session (NBC News; Star Tribune).

The boycott was designed to prevent Republicans from using their fleeting numerical advantage to reorganize the chamber, take control of committees, and potentially refuse to seat a Democrat whose narrow election victory was being contested in court (Star Tribune; KFGO). Democrats labeled the GOP's moves a "power grab," while Republicans insisted, they were simply following the law and the will of voters (Star Tribune; NBC News). Governor Tim Walz urged both sides to reach a power-sharing agreement, predicting that the special election would restore the House to a 67-67 tie and force cooperation (WTOP News).

The walkout underscored the fragility of legislative control in a closely divided chamber and the centrality of quorum rules in modern legislative strategy. It also highlighted the deepening partisan polarization in Minnesota, with lawmakers and observers describing the standoff as "as bad as I've ever seen it" and warning of a potential government shutdown if the impasse continued into the budget-writing season (Star Tribune). The episode drew national attention as a case study in how procedural tactics and legal disputes can paralyze a legislature, even in a state with a tradition of bipartisan dealmaking (NBC News; KNSI Radio).

### **Summary of Case Study Findings:**

In summary, legislative walkouts, once rare, have become a defining feature of partisan conflict in several U.S. states, but the roots and repercussions of these protests run deeper than the headlines suggest. While Oregon's recent walkouts have drawn national attention, similar tactics in Texas, Indiana, Wisconsin, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington reveal a pattern: walkouts flourish where institutional rules empower minorities, partisan polarization is high, and the stakes of policy battles are existential for one side or the other (Ballotpedia; Politico; Route Fifty).

### *Institutional Design as Enabler and Incentive*

The most walkout-prone states, Oregon, Texas, Indiana, Wisconsin, and others share a supermajority quorum rule to conduct business (Ballotpedia). This is not a trivial procedural detail. It means a unified minority can, by simply leaving, bring government to a standstill. In Oregon, for example, 11 Republican senators can paralyze the 30-member chamber; in Texas, 51 House Democrats can halt a 150-member chamber (Ballotpedia; Business Insider). In contrast, most states require only a simple majority, making walkouts symbolic and rarely effective.

This institutional design, originally intended to foster consensus and protect minority rights, now acts as a double-edged sword. It gives the minority a veto over the majority's agenda, but also incentivizes the majority to pursue more aggressive, "must-pass" legislation while in power, knowing the window for action is narrow and that obstruction is always a threat (Route Fifty). Thus, the rules themselves fuel the very polarization and brinkmanship they were meant to moderate.

### *Policy Triggers: Why These Issues?*

Walkouts are not used for routine disagreements. They are reserved for policy battles that cut to the core of party identity and, often, the urban-rural divide. In Oregon, walkouts have blocked climate policy, abortion, gun safety, and gender-affirming care, issues that rural Republicans see as existential threats to their way of life and urban Democrats see as moral imperatives (Politico; Ballotpedia). In Texas, the triggers have been voting rights and redistricting, with Democrats arguing that GOP bills would disenfranchise communities of color and cement minority rule (19th News; Ballotpedia). In Indiana and Wisconsin, the flashpoints have been labor rights and union power, with Democrats walking out to defend collective

bargaining and public sector unions (Wikipedia, “2011 Indiana legislative walkouts”; Wikipedia, “2011 Wisconsin Senate recall elections”).

Other states show similar patterns. California has seen walkouts over budget disputes and labor issues, with notable protests in the early 2000s and more recent actions tied to environmental and social policy. Colorado’s walkouts have centered on gun control and budget conflicts, while Florida’s have focused on education funding and voting rights (Ballotpedia). Georgia’s walkouts have been driven by voting rights and redistricting battles, and Illinois has seen minority parties leverage walkouts over labor and budget issues. Kentucky’s walkouts have protested pension reforms and labor legislation, and Nevada’s have targeted tax policy and education funding. New Mexico’s walkouts have centered on budget disputes and social policy, while New York’s have often focused on budget and social issues. Ohio has seen walkouts over labor rights and budget conflicts, Pennsylvania over redistricting and voting rights, and Washington state over environmental policy and labor issues (Ballotpedia).

These are not just policy disputes, they are battles over the rules of the game: who votes, who is represented, who sets the agenda. Walkouts become a way for the minority to say, “If you change the rules, we won’t play.” This is both a protest and a warning: push too far, and the system itself may break down.

### *Political Attitudes and Evolving Public Opinion*

Public attitudes toward walkouts are complex and shifting. In the short term, supporters of the minority party often cheer walkouts as heroic resistance, while opponents decry them as dereliction of duty (Politico; OPB). But as walkouts become more frequent and disrupt more than just the targeted legislation, delaying budgets, emergency aid, or bipartisan bills, public patience wears thin. Oregon’s Measure 113, passed with 68% of the vote, including in many

rural counties (Ballotpedia). This suggests that even many who sympathize with the minority's motives are frustrated by persistent gridlock and want consequences for obstruction.

Yet, the passage of such measures also raises questions about representation. In Oregon, some rural voters now face the prospect of being unable to re-elect their preferred senator, even if they supported the walkout. This tension between the desire for functional government and the right to protest is unresolved and may only deepen as polarization grows (Politico; KLCC).

#### *Comparative Outcomes: What Changes, What Does not*

Walkouts sometimes achieve short-term policy victories or force negotiation (Indiana 2011, Oregon 2023, New Mexico budget deals), but more often, the majority prevails, sometimes by waiting out the minority, sometimes by changing the rules (Wisconsin 2011, Texas 2021, Pennsylvania redistricting). The real impact is often in what is lost: walkouts routinely kill or delay dozens of unrelated bills, undermine trust among lawmakers, and erode public faith in the legislative process (Ballotpedia; Route Fifty).

Another overlooked pattern is escalation. Each walkout sets a precedent, making it easier for the next minority to justify the tactic. This “arms race” dynamic is visible in Oregon, where walkouts have become routine, and in Texas, where both parties have used the tactic over the past two decades (Ballotpedia; Business Insider). States like California, Colorado, Illinois, and New York have also seen minority parties use walkouts to draw attention to their causes or negotiate concessions, even if the tactic is less likely to succeed due to different quorum rules or political cultures (Ballotpedia).

#### *Broader Democratic Implications*

The rise of legislative walkouts is both a symptom and a cause of democratic dysfunction. It reflects a breakdown in the incentives for negotiation and compromise, and a shift

toward zero-sum, winner-take-all politics (Kingzette et al. 663–677). As walkouts become a routine tool, the legislature risks losing its legitimacy as a forum for debate and collective decision-making. Instead, politics moves to the courts, the media, or the streets, further polarizing the public and undermining the possibility of governance (Berghahn Journals; Politico).

Yet, walkouts also serve as a warning signal. They highlight when the system is failing to accommodate legitimate minority concerns, and when the rules of the game may need to be rethought. The challenge for states like Oregon, Texas, Indiana, Wisconsin, California, and others is to find a new equilibrium, one that protects minority rights without allowing perpetual obstruction, and that restores incentives for lawmakers to stay, debate, and govern.

## **Chapter 2: Analysis of Ethical and Political Implications**

Oregon's legislative walkouts, while rooted in procedural rules, are crucible for testing the state's democratic values, the resilience of its institutions, and the boundaries of legitimate protest. Their increasing frequency and intensity reflect not only the quirks of Oregon's two-thirds quorum rule but also deeper currents of polarization, media fragmentation, and shifting civic norms (Ballotpedia; Politico; Bennett 4–5).

### **The Quorum Rule, Minority Leverage, and the Illusion of Consensus**

Oregon's supermajority quorum requirement, unlike the simple majority rule in most states, was designed to ensure broad participation and protect minority voices (Ballotpedia). Yet, as Bennett observes, institutional rules can create the “illusion” of consensus or fairness while masking deeper power struggles (Bennett 12). In practice, the rule has become a lever for minority obstruction, allowing a unified bloc to halt all businesses and force negotiation on their terms. This dynamic is not unique to Oregon but is most visible here due to the state's repeated, high-profile walkouts (Ballotpedia; Politico).

### **Ethical Complexity: Duty, Protest, and the Fragility of Civic Culture**

The ethics of walkouts are not reducible to simple narratives of right or wrong. On one hand, minority legislators claim a duty to resist what they see as majoritarian overreach, echoing Dan Rather's argument that true patriotism is found in dissent and humility, not in “breast-beating conceit” (Rather & Kirschner 19). Walkouts, in this framing, are a form of civic courage, a refusal to be complicit in policies that threaten core values or constituents' livelihoods.

Yet, as Lukianoff and Haidt warn, a culture of avoidance whether in universities or legislatures can foster “safetyism,” where discomfort is seen as harm and avoidance becomes the

default response (Lukianoff and Haidt 29). When walkouts become habitual, they may reflect not principled resistance but a retreat from the arduous work of persuasion and compromise.

Rather's call for "willingness of heart" to engage across difference is precisely what is lost when protest replaces deliberation (Rather & Kirschner 112).

### **Media, Perception, and the Manufacture of Crisis**

Bennett's *The Politics of Illusion* is particularly relevant in understanding how media coverage shapes, amplifies, and sometimes distorts the meaning of walkouts. The "media logic" Bennett describes that favoring spectacle, conflict, and narrative over substance turns legislative standoffs into theater, often flattening complex motives into good-versus-evil storylines (Bennett 47–48). In Oregon, conservative media frame walkouts as heroic defense of rural values, while progressive outlets cast them as sabotage. This dynamic not only deepens polarization but also obscures the institutional stakes: the erosion of legislative capacity and public trust (Kingzette et al. 663–664; Bennett 13).

Moreover, Bennett warns that the "illusion of choice" in media consumption, where citizens gravitate toward outlets that confirm their biases undermines the possibility of shared facts and mutual understanding (Bennett 6). The result is a feedback loop: lawmakers, attuned to polarized media and primary voters, are incentivized to escalate rather than resolve conflict. Walkouts thus become both a symptom and a cause of democratic fragmentation.

### **Institutional Learning and Unintended Consequences**

What is sometimes overlooked is how walkouts and subsequent reforms, like Measure 113, can lead to a kind of "institutional learning", but not always in the way reformers hope. As Bennett notes, political actors adapt to new constraints, sometimes by escalating tactics, finding new loopholes, or shifting conflict to other arenas (Bennett 221). For example, if walkouts

become too costly, minority parties may turn to judicial challenges, media campaigns, or even encourage recall efforts, shifting the battleground rather than resolving the underlying conflict.

### **The Role of Local Civic Infrastructure**

The erosion of local civic institutions, such as newspapers, town halls, and nonpartisan organizations, has made it harder for Oregonians to find common ground or hold lawmaker's accountable outside of partisan frames (Rather & Kirschner 228; Bennett 207). This vacuum amplifies the impact of walkouts, as fewer mediating institutions exist to channel disagreement productively. The decline of shared civic spaces means that legislative protest is less likely to lead to dialogue and more likely to reinforce polarization.

### **The “Chilling Effect” and Legislative Diversity**

Measure 113 and similar reforms may have a “chilling effect” on legislative diversity and dissent. Potential candidates from minority or rural districts may be discouraged from running if protest tactics could end their careers, potentially narrowing the range of voices in the legislature (KLCC; Bennett 223). This could inadvertently reinforce urban dominance and further alienate rural communities, deepening the very divides walkouts seek to highlight.

### **Comparative Lessons: What Works Elsewhere?**

Other states have managed polarization differently, some with strong power-sharing rules, independent redistricting commissions, or robust bipartisan caucuses. For example, states with more flexible rules for minority input or cross-party committee leadership see fewer walkouts and more negotiated outcomes (Ballotpedia; Kingzette et al. 675). Oregon's experience, while dramatic, is not the only possible trajectory; institutional design can either mitigate or exacerbate walkout incentives.

## **Power Dynamics, Majority Rule, and the Erosion of Democratic Norms**

Walkouts are not just about policy disputes; they are about who gets to set the agenda and define the boundaries of legitimate governance. Oregon’s Measure 113 is a voter-driven attempt to restore majority rule and legislative functionality (Ballotpedia; KLCC). Yet, as Bennett notes, institutional reforms often address symptoms rather than root causes and may inadvertently fuel further cynicism if they are perceived as partisan tools (Bennett 221).

The normalization of walkouts, and the punitive responses they provoke, risk creating a cycle of escalation, each side justifying its tactics as a response to the other’s excesses. Again, Lukianoff and Haidt’s critique of “us-versus-them” thinking is apt here: the more politics is framed as existential struggle, the less room there is for compromise, and the more attractive procedural brinkmanship becomes (Lukianoff and Haidt 27). Rather’s vision of patriotism as “a willingness to listen, to learn, to change” is increasingly at odds with a political culture that rewards purity and punishes negotiation (Rather & Kirschner 201).

### *Power Dynamics and the Laws of Power in Oregon’s Legislative Walkouts*

Oregon’s legislative walkouts are a vivid case study in the strategic application, and at times, violation of classic power principles. When one party accuses the other of abusing their power, it is important to know what exactly that person has power over. Robert Greene’s *The 48 Laws of Power* provides a provocative lens for understanding how lawmakers can maneuver within, and sometimes against, the institutional and cultural constraints of state politics. Yet, as political scientists and critics note, the realities of political power in a democracy are far more complex and ethically fraught than Greene’s often Machiavellian advice suggests (Bennett 4–5; Caro qtd. in SocialSci LibreTexts1; BitGlint3).

### *Law 1: Never Outshine the Master*

In Oregon, minority party leaders have been careful not to directly challenge the legitimacy of the majority party or the institution itself. Instead, they use walkouts to subtly undermine the majority's control, forcing Democrats to negotiate without appearing to usurp their authority outright. By framing their actions as a principled defense of constitutional norms rather than a personal attack on Democratic leadership Republicans avoid triggering a backlash that might come from appearing arrogant or disrespectful (Greene 1; Politico). This approach preserves their standing among colleagues and the public, allowing them to maintain influence even as the political minority.

### *Law 3: Conceal Your Intentions*

Oregon Republicans and Democrats have often been accused of masking their true objectives when initiating walkouts. For example, the 2023 walkout was initially justified on procedural grounds such as the readability of bill summaries rather than the more controversial opposition to abortion and gun legislation (KLCC; OPB). This allowed them to build a broader coalition of support and keep the majority off-balance, uncertain about what concessions might bring the walkout to an end. Greene notes that by concealing intentions, actors can manipulate negotiations and avoid early resistance (Greene 15).

### *Law 5: Guard Your Reputation*

Both parties in Oregon are acutely aware of the importance of public image. Democrats have worked to portray Republicans as irresponsible "obstructionists," while Republicans cast themselves as principled defenders of rural values and constitutional process (The Oregonian; Politico). Reputation management is crucial: a single misstep or public relations blunder can

erode public sympathy and weaken negotiating leverage. Greene emphasizes that reputation is the “cornerstone of power,” and once it is damaged, recovery is difficult (Greene 33).

*Law 6: Court Attention at All Costs*

Walkouts are inherently dramatic and draw intense media coverage. By leaving the Capitol, minority legislators ensure their grievances dominate the news cycle, reframing the debate around their chosen issues and rallying their base (Ballotpedia; Bennett 47–48). This tactic not only pressures the majority but also signals to supporters that their representatives are fighting for their interests. Greene advises that attention—even negative—can be a source of power, as it keeps one’s cause in the public eye (Greene 48).

*Law 12: Use Selective Honesty and Generosity to Disarm Your Victim*

Democrats have sometimes used transparency and selective concessions to isolate Republicans and sway public opinion. For example, they have publicly emphasized their willingness to negotiate on certain bill provisions while holding firm on core values, creating the impression of reasonableness and openness (Oregon Senate Democrats). Greene argues that selective honesty can disarm opponents and build trust, even as one pursues strategic goals (Greene 87).

*Law 15: Crush Your Enemy Totally*

The passage of Measure 113, which disqualifies lawmakers with ten or more unexcused absences from seeking reelection, is a direct attempt to eliminate the walkout tactic from Oregon politics (KLCC; NW Labor Press). By making the cost of walkouts prohibitively high, the majority sought to “crush” the minority’s most effective tool. Greene warns, however, that such total victory can provoke lasting resentment and drive opposition underground, rather than

fostering genuine reconciliation (Greene 123). The ongoing legal and political backlash from Republicans illustrates the risks of this approach (OPB; Politico).

*Law 18: Do Not Build Fortresses to Protect Yourself—Isolation is Dangerous*

Repeated walkouts and the resulting gridlock have, over time, isolated lawmakers from the broader public. As trust in the legislature erodes and gridlock becomes the norm, both parties risk becoming “fortresses,” disconnected from the everyday concerns of Oregonians (ClickOrlando; NW Labor Press). Greene cautions that isolation breeds vulnerability, as it cuts leaders off from vital information and support, making them easier targets for public frustration (Greene 147).

*Law 23: Concentrate Your Forces*

The success of a legislative walkout depends on absolute unity among minority members. Oregon Republicans’ ability to maintain a unified front during the 42-day 2023 walkout was crucial to its effectiveness (Ballotpedia). Any defection could have restored quorum and ended the protest. Greene’s law underscores that fragmented or divided forces invite defeat, while unity amplifies power (Greene 164).

*Law 28: Enter Action with Boldness*

Walkouts are inherently bold moves. By refusing to show up for weeks, or even fleeing the state, lawmakers demonstrate a willingness to take risks and endure criticism (PBS; Greene 226). This boldness can force the majority to the negotiating table, as hesitation or half-measures rarely yield concessions. Greene argues that bold action inspires confidence and can intimidate opponents, even when one’s position is objectively weaker (Greene 226).

*Law 36: Disdain Things You Cannot Have—Ignoring the Unwinnable*

Sometimes, the majority in Oregon has chosen to let certain bills die rather than appear to capitulate to minority demands. This calculated indifference—refusing to bargain under duress—signals strength and preserves long-term bargaining power, even at the cost of short-term legislative losses (Greene 291). Greene’s law suggests that ignoring what cannot be won can be more powerful than fruitless struggle.

*Law 45: Preach the Need for Change, But Never Reform Too Much at Once*

Measure 113’s overwhelming passage reflects a public appetite for reform, but Greene’s Law 45 warns against overreaching. If reforms are seen as silencing dissent or as a partisan power grab, they may undermine legitimacy and provoke unintended consequences (KLCC; Greene 381). Some Oregonians, especially in rural areas, now worry that the measure could disenfranchise their communities and chill legislative diversity (KLCC; NW Labor Press).

*Law 47: Do Not Go Past the Mark You Aimed For—In Victory, Learn When to Stop*

The overuse of walkouts, especially since 2019, led to public backlash and the passage of Measure 113 (Ballotpedia). Greene’s Law 47 reminds us of that power, when overplayed, often invites its own undoing (Greene 403). What began as a tool for principled protest became, in the eyes of many voters, routine obstruction.

*Law 48: Assume Formlessness—Adaptation and the Future of Power*

As legal and political constraints evolve, too must the tactics of both majority and minority. The most successful actors will be those who remain adaptable, shifting strategies as the terrain changes (Greene 452). Already, Oregon Republicans are exploring new legal and

electoral avenues, while Democrats are rethinking how to maintain legitimacy and public trust in an era of heightened scrutiny and accountability (OPB; Politico).

*Beyond Greene: The Realities and Limits of Political Power*

While Greene's laws are useful for understanding tactical maneuvers, they offer an incomplete and sometimes misleading picture of power in a democratic system. Political scientists like Bachrach and Baratz remind us that power is not just about overt conflict or spectacle, but also about "mobilization of bias", the ability to set agendas, define what issues are debated, and structure institutions to favor certain interests (Bachrach and Baratz qtd. in *Attenuated Democracy*<sup>5</sup>; SocialSci LibreTexts<sup>1</sup>). In Oregon, the supermajority quorum rule itself is a form of institutional power, shaping which voices are heard and which are sidelined.

Moreover, Greene's worldview can be critiqued as overly cynical and individualistic. As one behavioral science critic notes, Greene's model assumes all actors are motivated solely by power, ignoring the roles of morality, public service, and collective good (YouTube<sup>2</sup>). Power in a democracy is not just about manipulation or domination; it also relies on legitimacy, consent, and the willingness to share authority (Jedzini<sup>4</sup>; And Kirschner 201). Excessive focus on zero-sum tactics can undermine the very foundations of democratic governance, leading to cycles of retaliation and institutional decay (Bennett 221; Kingzette et al. 663–664).

*The Broader Lesson: Power as a Double-Edged Sword*

Oregon's legislative walkouts illustrate that power is as much about perception and adaptability as it is about numbers or rules. Greene's laws remind us that every display of power invites a response, and that the line between strategy and overreach is perilously thin. But as contemporary political science and democratic theory suggest, the healthiest forms of power are

those that are shared, deliberative, and grounded in public legitimacy, not just spectacle or coercion (Jedzini4; Bennett 223; And Kirschner 304).

### **Democratic Habits and the “Long Game”**

The solution to legislative dysfunction is not just procedural but cultural. As Rather and Haidt both suggest, democracy depends on habits of mind, being resilience, empathy, and curiosity, that must be cultivated over time (Rather & Kirschner 304; Lukianoff and Haidt 63). Walkouts, media spectacle, and procedural brinkmanship are symptoms of a deeper need for civic renewal, education, and leadership that values the “long game” of democratic stability over short-term wins. If Oregon and other states are to move beyond cycles of obstruction and retaliation, reforms must go beyond procedural fixes to address the underlying civic culture. This means fostering spaces for genuine dialogue, strengthening local journalism to counteract the “politics of illusion,” and cultivating leaders willing to risk discomfort for the sake of democratic renewal (Bennett 223; Lukianoff and Haidt 63).

### **Conclusion**

The ethical and political implications of Oregon’s legislative walkouts extend far beyond the immediate spectacle of lawmakers fleeing the Capitol. At their core, these walkouts reveal the fragility of democratic norms when institutional rules, partisan incentives, and media dynamics converge to reward confrontation over collaboration. The state’s supermajority quorum requirement, once intended to foster inclusivity and minority protection, has become a double-edged sword, empowering protest but also enabling gridlock and eroding the legislature’s capacity to govern effectively (Ballotpedia; Bennett 12).

As this section has shown, the walkout phenomenon is not simply a story of right versus wrong, or majority versus minority. It is a reflection of deeper tensions within Oregon’s civic

culture: the struggle to balance principled dissent with the duty to deliberate, the temptation to retreat into partisan camps rather than engage across differences, and the growing influence of media narratives that amplify division rather than foster understanding (Bennett 47–48; Rather and Kirschner 112).

Recent reforms like Measure 113 represent the public’s desire for accountability and functional governance, but they also risk chilling legitimate dissent and narrowing the diversity of voices in the legislature (KLCC; Bennett 223). The challenge for Oregon is not merely to refine its procedural rules, but to renew the civic habits—humility, empathy, and a willingness to listen that sustain democracy overall (Rather & Kirschner 304; Lukianoff and Haidt 63).

Oregon’s experience offers both a cautionary tale and a call to action. Walkouts, and the responses they provoke, are symptoms of a larger democratic reckoning, one that will require institutional creativity, robust local civic infrastructure, and a recommitment to the “long game” of building trust and common purpose. Only by addressing these underlying dynamics can Oregon hope to move beyond cycles of obstruction and polarization, ensuring its legislature remains a forum for genuine debate and collective problem-solving.

## Chapter 3: Oregon Legislative Processes and Preventative Strategies

### Oregon Legislature Bill Procedures

The procedures for passing legislation in Oregon are governed by the state's constitution and the rules of the Oregon Legislative Assembly. While the formal process of bill passage appears straightforward on paper, the reality is far more complex, especially in a politically charged environment where walkouts and filibusters can block or delay legislative action (Ballotpedia). The key steps in the Oregon legislative process include bill introduction, committee review, second reading, third reading, and final passage. Each of these stages is shaped by political negotiations, media coverage, and public pressure, making the process dynamic and often unpredictable (Oregon Legislature).

#### *Bill Introduction and Referral*

Bills in Oregon can be introduced by any member of the legislature or through citizen initiatives, reflecting the state's commitment to participatory democracy. Once introduced, bills are assigned to a relevant committee, where the real work of shaping legislation occurs. Both House and Senate committees must review a bill before it can reach the floor for a vote (Oregon Legislature). Upon introduction, a bill is typically sent to a committee for a public hearing, where interested parties like citizens, lobbyists, advocacy groups, and government officials can submit testimony. Committees may hold multiple hearings to hear arguments for and against the bill and may amend the bill based on input from various stakeholders.

#### *Committee Review and Amendments*

Committee review is one of the most critical stages of the legislative process because committees have the power to revise, amend, or even kill a bill altogether. As Oregon's

legislature is bicameral, a bill must pass through committees in both the House and Senate before reaching the floor. Committees hold hearings where experts and stakeholders testify about the bill's potential impacts. Amendments are proposed, and the committee can choose to send the bill to the floor with or without revisions. Importantly, committee members have the authority to "kill" a bill during this stage, meaning it does not advance to the floor at all (Oregon State Legislative Review, 2021). Both parties have used committee work to advance their priorities: Democrats have shepherded progressive policies through committee, while Republicans have sometimes used their influence to ensure bills receive thorough scrutiny or to block measures they view as harmful to their constituents.

#### *The Floor Process: First, Second, and Third Readings*

After passing out of committee, the bill moves to the floor for a series of important procedural steps where legislators debate the bill's merits and vote on whether to move the bill forward. At the first reading the bill is read by title on the floor and is then referred to by the appropriate committee for further discussion. The second reading consists of the bill being debated by the full chamber (House or Senate). Legislators can propose further amendments at this stage. After debate, the bill is voted on, and if passed, it moves on to the other chamber. The third reading, this is the final vote on the bill in its current form, after which it is sent to the other chamber for review. If both chambers pass the same version of the bill, it is sent to the Governor for approval or veto (Oregon Legislature).

Throughout these readings, lawmakers from both parties often engage in robust debate. For example, Democrats may highlight the social benefits of a bill, while Republicans may raise concerns about fiscal responsibility or unintended consequences. This deliberative process allows for a diversity of perspectives to be considered before the final passage.

### *Governor's Approval*

Once both chambers pass the bill, it is sent to the governor for approval. The Governor can sign the bill into law, veto it, or allow it to become law without their signature. In Oregon, a bill passed by the legislature becomes law unless vetoed by the Governor. However, the Governor's veto can be overridden by a two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate (Oregon Legislature). Governors from both parties have exercised their veto power judiciously, sometimes using it to encourage further negotiation or to address concerns raised by minority legislators.

### *Challenges in Bill Passage and the "Not Seen" Bills*

Despite the apparent clarity of these procedures, Oregon's legislative process is often hindered by political gridlock, especially when walkouts occur. In the 2023 session, for example and as stated previously, the walkout by Senate Republicans prevented a quorum in the Senate, halting the passage of key legislation and resulting in substantial delays (Ballotpedia; The Oregonian). This led to several bills being delayed or never reaching the Governor's desk for consideration.

Not all bills introduced during a session make it to the final stages of the legislative process. According to a 2021 study by the *National Conference of State Legislatures* (NCSL), only about 20–30% of bills introduced in state legislatures across the U.S. are passed into law. Oregon, being no exception, experiences a similar phenomenon where a substantial number of bills are never even considered in committee or fail to make it through all stages of the legislative process (NCSL).

A study by the *Oregon Center for Public Policy* (OCPP) found that during the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions, only around 18% of bills introduced reached the Governor's desk,

signaling that political gridlock and contentious issues often prevent a substantial number of bills from being acted upon (OCPP, 2023). This rate is particularly concerning given Oregon’s ambitious policy goals, such as climate change legislation and tax reform, which are frequently blocked by partisan divides and walkout tactics. For instance, in the 2023 legislative session, Senate Bill 528, which aimed to create stricter environmental regulations for fossil fuel companies, was delayed due to the walkout, preventing its review in time for the legislative session to conclude (Oregon State Legislative Assembly, 2023).

The “not seen” bills are often the result of political maneuvering, where partisan conflicts or strategic walkouts result in certain bills being shelved indefinitely. In addition to partisan gridlock, issues such as gerrymandering and overrepresentation of rural areas can contribute to the failure of bills, as urban and progressive regions sometimes find their legislative priorities blocked by a minority of more conservative lawmakers (Baker and Van Slyke, 2023). However, it is also worth noting that both parties have used procedural tools to protect their priorities: Democrats have occasionally delayed bills to build consensus or avoid hasty legislation, while Republicans have used walkouts to give their constituents a stronger voice in the process.

### *The "Kill Zones" of Legislative Procedure*

Certain bills are often “killed” in committees or fail to be considered at all. This occurs when committee chairs or party leaders decide not to bring bills to the floor for debate. A considerable number of bills, particularly those introduced by minority parties, languish in these “kill zones,” where bills are never debated or receive a “do not pass” recommendation from the committee (Oregon State Legislative Review, 2021). For example, delayed environmental justice legislation introduced in 2023 was not even scheduled for a committee hearing due to resistance from Senate Republicans, preventing action on critical climate policy aimed at reducing carbon

emissions and improving air quality in Oregon's most vulnerable communities (The Oregonian, 2023). On the other hand, Democratic committee chairs have sometimes used their discretion to prioritize urgent budget or public health bills, ensuring that essential legislation is not stalled by procedural bottlenecks.

### **Oregon Measure 113: A Comparative Analysis**

Measure 113 has been discussed frequently in this thesis. However, considering that it was blatantly disregarded during the walkout and did little to prevent it only to be taken seriously later, it is an important area to focus in on. It was introduced in response to repeated legislative walkouts that deprived the Oregon Legislature of a quorum, halting the passage of key bills and stalling governance (Ballotpedia; EMOregon). Approved by voters in November 2022, the measure amended the state constitution to disqualify any legislator with ten or more unexcused absences in a session from seeking reelection in the next term (EMOregon; Ballotpedia). This reform was designed to address gridlock and restore legislative accountability, especially after high-profile walkouts in 2019 and 2023 led by Senate Republicans to block Democratic priorities on climate, healthcare, and education (OCPP, 2022; Kotek, 2022; Ballotpedia).

#### *Supporters' Perspective*

Governor Tina Kotek and State Senator Michael Dembrow (D-Portland) were among the most vocal supporters of Measure 113. They argued that lawmakers are elected and paid to represent their districts and participate in the legislative process, not to paralyze it for political gain (Kotek, 2022; Dembrow, 2022). The *Oregon Center for Public Policy* noted that walkouts have repeatedly stalled significant policy initiatives, including climate action, public health reform, and school funding (OCPP, 2022). Supporters contend that Measure 113 increases accountability, restores public trust, and brings Oregon in line with most other states by

discouraging absenteeism and ensuring the legislature can function even amid partisan disagreement (EMOregon; OCPP, 2022). The *No More Costly Walkouts Coalition* emphasized that in any other profession, chronic absenteeism would not be tolerated, and the same standard should apply to lawmakers (EMOregon).

### *Critics' Perspective*

Opponents, including Senators Tim Knopp, Brian Boquist, and Kim Thatcher, argue that Measure 113 imposes punitive restrictions that could stifle legitimate protest and minority dissent (Boquist, 2022; Thatcher, 2022; ). They contend that walkouts are sometimes the only tool available to minority lawmakers to resist what they view as overreach or unconstitutional legislation, such as the 2019 cap-and-trade bill or the 2023 healthcare expansion (Wikipedia; Ballotpedia). Senator Boquist has argued that penalizing protest in this way undermines the legislature's system of checks and balances and could silence opposition voices, especially in rural districts that already feel underrepresented (Boquist, 2022). Senator Thatcher warned that the measure risks entrenching majority power and chilling robust debate, reducing the legislature's responsiveness to all Oregonians (Thatcher, 2022).

### *Legal Ruling and Immediate Impact:*

In February 2024, the Oregon Supreme Court upheld Measure 113, confirming that the disqualification for excessive absences applies immediately after the current term (KATU; ). The court found that the ballot measure's intent and language were clear to voters, and that the Secretary of State's enforcement was consistent with both the ballot title and the voters' pamphlet (KATU). As a result, the nine Republican senators and one Independent who participated in the 2023 walkout are barred from running for reelection in 2024 or 2026 (KATU).

The court acknowledged concerns about potential political retribution but affirmed the state's authority to set conditions for legislative office (Nelson, 2024; KATU).

### *Conclusion: A Crossroads for Oregon Politics*

In conclusion, Measure 113 marks a pivotal turning point in Oregon's legislative history, embodying both the promise and the peril of procedural reform. By imposing real consequences for repeated walkouts, the measure seeks to restore legislative reliability and public trust in government, addressing widespread frustration with gridlock and absenteeism (Ballotpedia; KATU). Yet, its adoption also surfaces enduring ethical dilemmas: How should a democracy balance the need for an effective, functioning legislature with the right of minority parties to protest and resist policies they view as unjust? The measure's strict penalties raise complex questions about the legitimacy of dissent, the risk of silencing underrepresented voices, particularly from rural or minority districts, and the potential for majority rule to harden into majoritarian dominance (Boquist, 2022; Thatcher, 2022). As Oregon's lawmakers and voters adapt to this new reality, Measure 113 will not only reshape the strategies and alliances within the statehouse but also serve as a bellwether for other states grappling with similar tensions between accountability and protest. Oregon's experience may help define the contours of legislative responsibility, the limits of procedural resistance, and the evolving ethics of governance in an era of deepening polarization, lessons that are certain to resonate far beyond the state's borders (OCPP; EMOregon; Politico).

### **Conflict Resolution in the Oregon Legislature: Navigating the Dispute Landscape**

In the wake of Measure 113, Oregon's legislature stands at a stalemate, not just with law and procedure, but of culture and ethics. The penalties now imposed on lawmakers for walkouts underscore a deeper truth: sustainable governance in a polarized era depends not only on rules

but on how conflict is managed, how dialogue is fostered, and how adversaries are transformed into collaborators. In this context, effective conflict resolution is not a procedural luxury but a democratic necessity, especially when the issues at stake cut to the core of identity and values (Ballotpedia; Platt, 2023).

### *Understanding the Need for Conflict Resolution*

Conflict resolution is the lifeblood of any functioning democracy, but in a legislature as ideologically diverse as Oregon's, its absence can paralyze the entire system. While Measure 113 aims to deter walkouts and restore legislative efficiency, it cannot address the underlying causes of gridlock: deep-seated mistrust, divergent worldviews, and the polarization spiral described by Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff, where each side's actions provoke ever more extreme reactions from the other (Haidt and Lukianoff; Stern NYU). In this spiral, even well-intentioned reforms can be interpreted as existential threats, fueling further discord rather than resolution.

The challenge, as Roger Fisher and William Ury teach in *Getting to Yes*, is to “separate the people from the problem” and focus on interests, not positions (Fisher and Ury 10). In legislative terms, this means moving beyond party labels and zero-sum thinking to identify the real needs and fears that drive conflict, whether it is rural lawmakers' anxiety over economic survival or urban legislators' commitment to social justice. Dr. Jennifer Platt of the University of Oregon emphasizes that true legislative conflict resolution requires not just negotiation skills, but a willingness to listen deeply, acknowledge the legitimacy of opposing concerns, and build trust even when agreement seems impossible (Platt, 2023).

### *Key Strategies for Legislative Conflict Resolution*

To address the complexities of conflict in the Oregon legislature and beyond, several strategies can be implemented to promote constructive dialogue and minimize disruptions such

as walkouts. These approaches focus on improving communication, fostering accountability, and creating durable frameworks for collaboration, even in the face of deep polarization.

Facilitated dialogue, led by a neutral and skilled mediator, is increasingly recognized as a vital tool for breaking legislative deadlock. Bringing lawmakers from opposing parties together in a confidential, structured setting allows them to move beyond posturing and genuinely explore each other's concerns. In the aftermath of the 2023 walkout, Senator Kim Thatcher (R-Keizer) underscored the need for "open, honest communication" and lamented that "too often, we talk past each other instead of to each other" (Thatcher, 2023). Research from the University of Oregon's Conflict Resolution Program highlights that such dialogue can disrupt entrenched adversarial dynamics and foster the kind of trust necessary for compromise (Platt, 2023).

Drawing from the principles outlined in *Getting to Yes*, interest-based negotiation shifts the focus from rigid positions to the underlying needs and motivations of each party (Fisher and Ury 11). In Oregon, this means recognizing that Republican resistance to climate policy is often rooted in concerns about rural economies, while Democratic advocacy for environmental reform is driven by climate urgency and public health. When lawmakers frame their negotiations around shared interests such as economic security and environmental stewardship rather than zero-sum demands, they are more likely to find creative solutions. For example, during the 2019 walkout, some lawmakers floated proposals for targeted economic transition funds to help rural communities adapt to new climate regulations, illustrating how reframing the conversation can open new pathways for agreement (The Oregonian, 2019).

Coalition-building is essential in a state where neither party consistently holds a supermajority. Governor Tina Kotek's efforts to convene bipartisan working groups on transportation and housing have shown that, even in a polarized environment, it is possible to

forge alliances that cut across party lines (Kotek, 2023). The 2021 special legislative session on wildfire recovery, for example, produced a rare bipartisan package after lawmakers from both parties agreed to prioritize urgent community needs over partisan advantage. Such coalitions demonstrate that collaboration is not about erasing differences but about building enough trust to solve shared problems (Stone, Patton, and Heen 16).

Transparency is a cornerstone of ethical legislative conduct. By making committee hearings, floor debates, and even backroom negotiations more accessible to the public, Oregon lawmakers can ensure that decisions reflect a broader range of voices and reduce the suspicion that fuels walkouts (Rather & Kirschner 112). The Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS) has expanded public access to legislative proceedings, and recent reforms require more timely disclosure of amendments and votes, helping to hold lawmakers accountable to both their constituents and the process itself (OLIS, 2024).

### *The Ethical Role of Mediation and the Need for Political Courage*

Mediation offers a structured process for adversarial parties to resolve disputes with the help of a neutral third party. In legislative contexts, mediators can help lawmakers surface hidden interests, clarify misunderstandings, and develop face-saving compromises that might be impossible in the glare of partisan debate (Cloke 44). Oregon’s experience suggests that mediation is an underutilized tool: while professional mediators are often employed in labor and community disputes, their use in legislative standoffs remains rare.

Political courage is essential for mediation to succeed. As *Mediating Dangerously* observes, “The greatest obstacle to resolution is often the fear of vulnerability—of being seen to compromise, to listen, or to change one’s mind” (Cloke 31). Senator Brian Boquist (I-Dallas), a central figure in the 2023 walkout, argued that his opposition to climate bills was rooted in a

commitment to rural livelihoods and economic justice. Yet, the absence of mediated dialogue meant that positions hardened, and the only remaining option was protest through absence (Boquist, 2023). Had a formal mediation process been in place, it might have created space for Boquist and Democratic leaders to explore incremental policy adjustments or rural impact mitigation, potentially averting the walkout.

Legislative mediation also demands a willingness to “lean into” difficult conversations, as outlined in *Difficult Conversations* (Stone, Patton, and Heen 23). Lawmakers must be prepared to acknowledge the legitimacy of their opponents’ fears and values, even when they disagree with solutions. This ethical openness is not a sign of weakness but a hallmark of democratic maturity.

### *The Broader Implications for National Government*

Oregon’s legislative experience serves as a compelling case study for national policymakers grappling with polarization and gridlock. The state’s use of facilitated dialogue, interest-based negotiation, and coalition-building offers a model for breaking partisan deadlocks in Congress and other state legislatures (Agora-Parl 12; Fisher and Ury 56). The tension between protest and compromise in Oregon mirrors challenges faced at the federal level, where government shutdowns and impeachment proceedings have highlighted the risks of unchecked conflict (Rather & Kirschner 201; Haidt and Lukianoff 207).

Nationally, the lessons from Oregon suggest that structural reforms, such as independent mediation panels, bipartisan task forces, and expanded transparency measures can help restore trust and functionality to democratic institutions (Platt, 2023; GSDRC). However, as *The Coddling of the American Mind* warns, lasting change also requires a cultural shift: lawmakers

and citizens alike must move beyond “us versus them” thinking and embrace the discomfort of honest, empathetic dialogue (Haidt and Lukianoff 274).

By institutionalizing conflict resolution strategies and fostering a culture of political courage, Oregon is not only addressing its own legislative challenges but also contributing to a broader conversation about the future of American democracy. The state’s ongoing experiments in mediation and collaboration may well serve as a blueprint for a more resilient, ethical, and effective form of governance nationwide.

### **Recommendations for Preventative Resolution Bills: Addressing Legislative Gridlock and Ensuring Ethical Governance**

The 2023 Oregon legislative walkout highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive preventative measures to address the systemic issues that fuel legislative gridlock, partisan conflict, and ethical dilemmas (Ballotpedia). To prevent future walkouts and cultivate a more ethical, transparent, and cooperative legislative process, Oregon should introduce a series of targeted resolution bills, each beginning with a dedicated task force to study and recommend best practices, followed by legislative acts to implement proven solutions.

#### *Oregon Legislative Mediation and Conflict Resolution Task Force and Act*

A Legislative Mediation and Conflict Resolution Task Force would first investigate how structured mediation could be systematically integrated into the Oregon legislative process. This bipartisan group comprising legislators, legal experts, conflict-resolution professionals, and community members would study successful models such as California’s *Legislative Ethics and Mediation Commission* and Switzerland’s government mediation programs, as well as Oregon’s own *Dispute Resolution Commission* (California State Assembly, 2019; Federal Department of Justice and Police, 2020; ODRC, 2021). The task force would assess the need for mediation in

recurring high-conflict areas, consult stakeholders, and develop guidelines for when and how mediation should be triggered such as before a walkout or when a bill is blocked for a set period. It would also recommend ongoing conflict-resolution training for all lawmakers. If mediation is found effective, a subsequent act would establish a permanent legislative mediation office, fund professional mediators, and require conflict-resolution training as part of the new legislator orientation. This builds on Oregon’s statutory support for mediation (ORS 36.100–36.245) and leverages existing infrastructure for a more collaborative legislative culture.

#### *Oregon Legislative Transparency and Accountability Task Force and Act*

To strengthen public trust and legislative accountability, a Legislative Transparency and Accountability Task Force would review Oregon’s current transparency laws and digital infrastructure, benchmarking them against leading states like California and international digital democracy platforms (ORS 192; California Senate, 2020; KTVZ, 2023). The task force would study innovations such as AI-powered bill tracking, participatory budgeting, and real-time voting records, and consult with civic tech experts and the public on desired improvements (Vanguardngr; StateScoop). Recommendations would include expanding online platforms for bill progress, live-streaming all committee meetings, and requiring plain-language summaries for all legislation. Following the task force’s report, a legislative act would mandate these upgrades, set standards for public access, and provide funding for new transparency tools, ensuring that Oregonians can follow, understand, and participate in the legislative process at every stage.

#### *Oregon Legislative Ethics Accountability Task Force and Act*

A Legislative Ethics Accountability Task Force would be tasked with a comprehensive review of the ethical standards governing Oregon lawmakers, focusing especially on the impact and fairness of Measure 113’s penalties for legislative absences (State of Oregon, 2022; ). This

task force would consult legal scholars, review national and international best practices, and consider whether a tiered system of sanctions such as temporary suspension or loss of committee roles for minor absences, escalating to disqualification for repeated or egregious violations would better balance accountability with the right to protest (American Political Science Association, 2020; Cloke 44). The group would also explore restorative justice models and the potential for citizen ethics panels to review high-profile cases. Based on its findings, a legislative act could amend Measure 113 to introduce a more nuanced penalty system, expand the oversight role of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC), and require regular sunset reviews of all legislative ethics rules (ORS 244.250; Yamhill County, 2024).

#### *Oregon Legislative Cooperation and Partnership Task Force and Act*

To foster a more cooperative and less adversarial legislative environment, a Legislative Cooperation and Partnership Task Force would investigate successful bipartisan models from Oregon and other states, such as Illinois' Joint Committees and Colorado's independent redistricting commission (Illinois General Assembly, 2020; Colorado Redistricting Commission, 2021). The task force would identify barriers to collaboration such as hyperpartisanship and lobbying and recommend structures to incentivize cross-party cooperation, like permanent bipartisan working groups for high-priority bills, coalition incentives (e.g., priority bill slots, shared committee leadership), and regular deliberative democracy forums for citizen input (Oregon Legislative Assembly, 2021; IPSA). After the task force's recommendations, a legislative act would formalize these working groups, provide funding, and codify the process for sustained, structured cooperation, ensuring that all major legislation is reviewed by a bipartisan panel before reaching the floor.

### *Cross-Branch and Community Collaboration Task Force and Act*

Recognizing that legislative gridlock often stems from poor coordination between branches and insufficient community input, a Cross-Branch and Community Collaboration Task Force would study models like Pew’s Results First initiative and the Bipartisan Policy Center’s working groups (Pew; Bipartisan Policy Center, 2024). The task force would recommend the creation of executive-legislative policy councils and structured constituent engagement such as regular “open office” days and community innovation labs where legislators, agency officials, and citizens co-design solutions to pressing problems. A legislative act would then mandate these councils and outreach programs, making cross-branch and community collaboration a permanent feature of Oregon’s governance.

### *Creative Governance and Inclusive Innovation Task Force and Act*

Finally, a Creative Governance and Inclusive Innovation Task Force would explore how participatory democracy, design thinking, and technological innovation can be harnessed to address Oregon’s most complex challenges (Creative Impact Research Centre Europe, 2023; IHS Rotterdam, 2025). The task force would pilot policy prototyping workshops, participatory budgeting, and a Legislative Innovation Fund to support experimental projects such as AI-driven bill analysis and citizen juries. It would also ensure that all task forces and working groups reflect Oregon’s demographic diversity and include marginalized voices in legislative innovation (IPSA; Creative Governance). If successful, a legislative act would institutionalize these innovations, fund creative governance pilots, and require regular evaluation and public reporting on outcomes.

*Conclusion: Integrating Acts and Task Forces*

By pairing targeted task forces with legislative acts, Oregon can ensure that reforms are evidence-based, context-specific, and adaptable. Task forces would conduct in-depth research, consult experts, and propose actionable solutions, while acts would provide the legal authority and funding needed for implementation. This dual approach allows Oregon to address gridlock, enhance transparency, strengthen ethics, and foster collaboration in a way that is both realistic and visionary—laying the groundwork for a resilient, ethical, and inclusive democracy (Resolution Oregon, 2024; Ballotpedia; ).

## Conclusion

Oregon's legislative walkouts are deeply rooted in the state's constitutional framework and political history. The two-third quorum rule requiring twenty senators and forty representatives to conduct business was originally designed to protect minority rights but has evolved into a powerful tool for obstruction, allowing a unified minority to paralyze governance (Ballotpedia; PBS). Since 2019, Oregon has experienced multiple walkouts, including the record-setting 42-day Senate walkout of 2023, which stalled over two hundred bills on issues such as climate, healthcare, and education in addition to the two controversial topics of gun reform and gender based health care (Ballotpedia; The Oregonian). These walkouts reflect the state's pronounced urban-rural divide, with urban Democrats advocating progressive reforms and rural Republicans contending that such measures threaten their communities' economic and cultural survival (Clucas 1066; Politico). This escalation is not unique to Oregon but is amplified by its distinctive rules and demographic shifts, mirroring national trends of polarization (Kingzette et al. 663–664).

The ethical and political dilemmas posed by walkouts are profound. Supporters, including Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp, frame walkouts as a defense of constitutional principles and rural interests, invoking democratic theories that legitimize protest majoritarian overreach (Politico; Berghahn Journals). Critics, such as Governor Tina Kotek and Senate Majority Leader Kate Lieber, argue that walkouts betray lawmakers' duty to govern and harm constituents by delaying urgent legislation on wildfires, housing, and mental health among other pressing concerns (Oregon Senate Democrats; KLCC). The passage of Measure 113 in 2022, which bars legislators with ten or more unexcused absences from reelection, embodies this tension. Passed with 68% voter support, Measure 113 aims to restore accountability but risks

disenfranchising rural districts and chilling dissent (Ballotpedia; OPB). The Oregon Supreme Court's 2024 ruling upholding Measure 113 confirmed its constitutionality while acknowledging unresolved questions about legislative autonomy (KATU; Nelson, 2024).

The legislative process in Oregon is formally robust, encompassing bill introduction, committee review, floor debate, and gubernatorial approval but in practice, it is plagued by procedural bottlenecks. Over 80% of bills die in committee or are never debated, often due to partisan tactics and the strategic use of “not seen” bills and “kill zones” (OCPP, 2023; Oregon State Legislative Review, 2021). The compressed 160-day biennial session intensifies time pressure and incentivizes last-minute negotiations and walkouts as leverage (Ballotpedia; Politico). Media coverage often amplifies conflict, framing walkouts as either heroic resistance or sabotage, which further polarizes public perception (Bennett 47–48; The Oregonian).

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that blends institutional reform, cultural renewal, and technological innovation. First, mediation and conflict resolution must be institutionalized. A dedicated task force or alternative should study best practices, such as California's Legislative Ethics and Mediation Commission and Switzerland's governmental mediation, and pilot “mediation triggers” for high-conflict bills (California State Assembly, 2019; Federal Department of Justice and Police, 2020). If successful, a legislative act would establish a permanent mediation office, mandate conflict-resolution training, and integrate mediation into legislative rules (ODRC, 2021; ORS 36.100–36.245).

Second, transparency and accountability should be enhanced. A task force should audit Oregon's transparency infrastructure and benchmark it against AI-driven platforms like California's Digital Democracy (KTVZ, 2023; Vanguardngr). Legislative acts would then mandate real-time voting records, live-streamed committee meetings, and plain-language bill

summaries (ORS 192; ORS 276A.259). Third, ethics reform is needed. A task force should evaluate Measure 113's fairness, explore tiered sanctions and restorative justice mechanisms, and recommend amendments as needed (Cloke 44; American Political Science Association, 2020). Acts would implement these changes and expand the oversight role of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (ORS 244.250; Yamhill County, 2024).

Fourth, bipartisan collaboration must be institutionalized. Task forces should analyze successful models like Illinois' Joint Committees and Colorado's redistricting commission, recommending bipartisan working groups and coalition incentives (Illinois General Assembly, 2020; Colorado Redistricting Commission, 2021). Legislative acts would formalize these structures and fund deliberative democracy forums (IPSA; Oregon Legislative Assembly, 2021). Fifth, cross-branch and community engagement should be strengthened. Task forces would propose executive-legislative policy councils and "open office" days for constituent input, with acts institutionalizing these programs and community innovation labs (Pew; Bipartisan Policy Center, 2024; Creative Impact Research Centre Europe, 2023).

Finally, creative governance and innovation are essential. Task forces would pilot policy prototyping, AI-driven bill analysis, and legislative innovation funds, while acts would establish a statewide innovation fund and mandate diversity in all task forces (IHS Rotterdam, 2025; Creative Governance; IPSA).

Oregon's experience offers critical lessons for addressing polarization nationwide. Institutional learning such as reforms like Measure 113 and mediation protocols when done properly could inspire other states grappling with gridlock or general unrest (Ballotpedia; Resolution Oregon, 2024). Sustainable change, however, requires moving beyond "us vs. them" narratives to foster empathy, dialogue, and shared purpose (Haidt and Lukianoff 274; And

Kirschner 304). Technological democratization, through AI-powered transparency platforms and participatory budgeting, could redefine civic engagement globally (Vanguardngr; StateScoop).

In conclusion, legislative walkouts, particularly the 2023 Oregon walkout, represent a significant political strategy that highlights the growing polarization and dysfunction within American politics. Oregon's unique legislative structure, combined with increasing political polarization, has created an environment where protests like walkouts are an effective means of exerting political power. However, the long-term consequences of such protests both legal and ethical pose challenges for the health of democratic institutions. As political divisions continue to deepen, it is likely that walkouts and other forms of legislative protest will become more common, raising important questions about their impact on the legislative process and American democracy. Oregon stands at a crossroads. By embracing institutional creativity, ethical accountability, and inclusive dialogue, the state can transform its legislature from a battleground into a workshop for democratic renewal. The path forward demands not only procedural reform but a recommitment to the civic virtues of humility, courage, and collective problem-solving, principles essential for navigating the challenges of 21st-century governance.

## Bibliography

- Agora-Parl. Strengthening Legislatures for Conflict Management in Fragile States. Agora, 2011, <https://agora-parl.org/resources/strengthening-legislatures-conflict-management-fragile-states>.
- Associated Press. "Oregon GOP Senators End 6-Week Walkout after New Agreements on Abortion, Guns." AP News, 15 June 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/oregon-gop-walkout-ends-e4cf9a17ce536232d158dfe4cc4fc96c>.
- Associated Press. "Republicans End Longest Walkout in Oregon Legislature's History." The Guardian, 16 June 2023, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/16/republicans-end-longest-walkout-in-oregon-legislatures-history](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/16/republicans-end-longest-walkout-in-oregon-legislatures-history).
- Baker, Jeff, and Tim Van Slyke. "Partisan Gridlock in Oregon." Oregon Policy Review, 2023.
- Baker, Mike. "2023 Oregon Legislature Session Ends in Crush of Bills." OPB, 25 June 2023, <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/06/25/2023-oregon-legislature-session-ends-in-crush-of-bills>.
- Baker, Mike. "In a Year of Capitol Feuds, Oregon Has a Political Breakdown." The New York Times, 4 June 2023, [www.nytimes.com/2023/06/04/us/oregon-legislature-republican-walkout.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/04/us/oregon-legislature-republican-walkout.html).
- Baker, Mike, and Emily Van Slyke. "Political Gridlock and Legislative Kill Zones in Oregon." The Oregon Journal of Politics, vol. 15, no. 4, 2023, pp. 52–68.
- Ballotpedia. "Noteworthy State Legislative Walkouts." Ballotpedia, [www.ballotpedia.org/Noteworthy\\_state\\_legislative\\_walkouts](http://www.ballotpedia.org/Noteworthy_state_legislative_walkouts).
- Ballotpedia. "Oregon Legislative Walkouts." Ballotpedia, [www.kgw.com/article/news/local/oregon-news/legislative-walkouts/283-abf50e4a-58ad-4be9-a85d-90e5c0155675](http://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/oregon-news/legislative-walkouts/283-abf50e4a-58ad-4be9-a85d-90e5c0155675).
- Bennett, W. Lance. The Politics of Illusion. 10th ed., University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- Berghahn Journals. "Protest and the Democratic Order." Democratic Theory, vol. 9, no. 2, 2022, pp. 1–18.
- Boquist, Brian. "Opposition to Measure 113: A Threat to Legislative Protest." Oregon Republican Review, 2022, [www.orrpublicanreview.com/opposing-measure-113](http://www.orrpublicanreview.com/opposing-measure-113).
- Bipartisan Policy Center. "Bipartisan Policy Center Launches Working Group to Enhance Legislative Process." Bipartisan Policy Center, 2024, <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/press-release/bipartisan-policy-center-launches-working-group-to-enhance-legislative-process/>.
- Bookey. "What Unites Us Summary." Bookey, 2024, <https://www.bookey.app/book/what-unites-us>.

- California Senate. "Senate Bill 94." California State Legislature, 2020, [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200SB94](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB94).
- California State Assembly. "Legislative Ethics and Mediation Commission." California State Legislature, 2019, <https://www.assembly.ca.gov/legislative-ethics-and-mediation-commission>.
- Cloke, Kenneth. *Mediating Dangerously: The Frontiers of Conflict Resolution*. Jossey-Bass, 2001.
- Clucas, Richard. "The 2001 Oregon Legislative Walkout." *Journal of State Politics*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2002, pp. 1064–1079.
- Clucas, Richard A. "The Oregon Constitution and the Quest for Party Reform." *Oregon Law Review*, vol. 87, 2008, pp. 1061–1087.
- Colorado Redistricting Commission. "2021 Final Report." Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions, 2021, <https://redistricting.colorado.gov/content/2021-final-report>.
- Creative Impact Research Centre Europe. "Transformative Governance – New Solutions for and with the Cultural and Creative Economies." Cicerone, 2023, <https://cicerone-project.eu/transformative-governance/>.
- Dahlberg, L., et al. "The Impact of Gun Violence Legislation on Gun-Related Deaths." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 111, no. 5, 2021, pp. 894–nine hundred.
- Dake, Lauren, and Dirk VanderHart. "Oregon Voters Tried to Put an End to Legislative Walkouts. So, What Happened?" OPB, 16 May 2023, [www.opb.org/article/2023/05/16/oregon-legislative-walkout-continues-despite-law-aimed-at-preventing-them/](http://www.opb.org/article/2023/05/16/oregon-legislative-walkout-continues-despite-law-aimed-at-preventing-them/).
- Daniels, Mark. *The Politics of Disruption: Legislative Walkouts in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Dembrow, Michael. "Support for Measure 113: Ensuring Accountability." *Oregon Legislative Journal*, 2022, [www.oregonlegislativejournal.com/113-support](http://www.oregonlegislativejournal.com/113-support).
- Demko, Paul. "'Thank God They Walked Out': Oregon's Partisan Divide Highlights Heightened Animosity in Statehouses." *Politico*, 13 Dec. 2023, [www.politico.com/news/2023/12/13/partisan-politics-oregon-walkout-00131348](http://www.politico.com/news/2023/12/13/partisan-politics-oregon-walkout-00131348).
- Edelman, Murray Jacob. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. University of Illinois Press, 1985.
- Federal Department of Justice and Police (Switzerland). "Mediation in Government." Swiss Confederation, 2020, <https://www.bj.admin.ch/bj/en/home.html>.
- Fenno, Richard F. "US House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review*, vol. 71, no. 3, 1977, pp. 883–917.

- Fischer, Carolyn. "The Economic Impact of Cap-and-Trade Programs." *Environmental Economics and Policy Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021, pp. 567–589.
- Fisher, Roger, and William Ury. *Getting Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Penguin, 2011.
- Flesch–Kincaid Readability Tests. Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flesch%E2%80%93Kincaid\\_readability\\_tests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flesch%E2%80%93Kincaid_readability_tests).
- GSDRC. "Strengthening Legislatures for Conflict Management in Fragile States." GSDRC, 2011, <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/strengthening-legislatures-for-conflict-management-in-fragile-states/>.
- Guttmacher Institute. "State Policies on Abortion." Guttmacher Institute, 2022, [www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/overview-abortion-laws](http://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/overview-abortion-laws).
- Haidt, Jonathan, and Greg Lukianoff. *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. Penguin Press, 2018.
- Henkels, Mark, and Brent Steel. "Oregon 2023: Entering the Post-COVID World." *California Journal of Politics and Policy*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2024, pp. 98–110.
- Illinois General Assembly. "Joint Committees." Illinois General Assembly, 2020, [https://www.ilga.gov/commission/jc/jc\\_home.html](https://www.ilga.gov/commission/jc/jc_home.html).
- IHS Rotterdam. "Creative Revolution Framework." Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, 2025, <https://www.ihs.nl/en/creative-revolution-framework>.
- Jaquiss, Nigel. "Oregon Senate Republicans Stage Walkout Over Abortion and Gun Bills." *Willamette Week*, 3 May 2023, <https://www.wweek.com/news/2023/05/03/oregon-senate-republicans-stage-walkout-over-abortion-and-gun-bills/>.
- KATU Staff. "Oregon Senate Republicans Cannot Run for Office Again after Walkout, Ruling Mandates." KATU, 1 Feb. 2024, <https://katu.com/news/local/oregon-supreme-court-rules-senate-republicans-cannot-seek-re-election-after-walkout>.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Kingzette, Jon, et al. "Support for Democratic Norms." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2021, pp. 663–677.
- KLCC Staff. "Measure 113 Would Make Legislative Walkouts Much Harder in Oregon." KLCC, 21 Oct. 2022, <https://www.klcc.org/politics-government/2022-10-21/measure-113-would-make-legislative-walkouts-much-harder-in-oregon>.
- Knopp, Tim. "Oregon Senate Republican Response to Climate Bill." Oregon Senate Press Release, 2023, [www.oregonlegislature.gov](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov).

- Kotek, Tina. "Governor's Statement on Measure 113." Oregon State Press Release, 2022, [www.oregon.gov/gov/press-release/113-support](http://www.oregon.gov/gov/press-release/113-support).
- Kotek, Tina. "Oregon's Moral Responsibility in Addressing Climate Change." Oregon Governor's Press Release, 2023, [www.oregon.gov/gov](http://www.oregon.gov/gov).
- Kraus, Anne Isabel, et al. "Dilemmas and Trade-Offs in Peacemaking: A Framework for Navigating Difficult Decisions." *Politics and Governance*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2019, pp. 1–12.
- KTVZ Staff. "New Oregon Transparency Website Launches with Links to Meetings, Records, Data, Budgets and More Info." KTVZ, 21 Dec. 2023, <https://ktvz.com/news/oregon-northwest/2023/12/21/new-oregon-transparency-website-launches-with-links-to-meetings-records-data-budgets-and-more-info/>.
- Laffer, Arthur B. *The Laffer Curve: A Guide to Tax Reform*. Hoover Institution Press, 2020.
- Mann, Thomas E., and Norman J. Ornstein. *It is Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*. Basic Books, 2016.
- Merkley, Jeff, and Mike Zamore. *Filibustered! How to Fix the Broken Senate and Save America*. The New Press, 2024.
- Morrison, M. "Boldt Decision: A Turning Point in Tribal Fishing Rights." *Journal of Native American Policy*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2020, pp. 121–135.
- National Center for Education Statistics. "NAEP Reading Report." National Center for Education Statistics, 2022, [nces.ed.gov](https://nces.ed.gov).
- National Institute of Justice. "Mass Shootings and Gun Violence." National Institute of Justice, 2022, [www.nij.ojp.gov](http://www.nij.ojp.gov).
- Nelson, Adrienne. "Oregon Supreme Court Ruling." Oregon Supreme Court, 2024.
- Nussbaum, Lydia. "Mediation as Regulation: Expanding State Governance over Private Disputes." *Utah Law Review*, vol. 2016, no. 2, 2016, pp. 361–407.
- NW Labor Press. "A Betrayal of Oregon Workers." NW Labor Press, 17 May 2024, <https://nwlaborpress.org/2024/05/a-betrayal-of-oregon-workers/>.
- OCPP. "Legislative Gridlock and Bill Passage in Oregon." Oregon Center for Public Policy, 2023, <https://www.ocpp.org/2023/legislative-gridlock-bill-passage-oregon/>.
- OCPP. "Oregon's Legislative Bottlenecks: Why Many Bills Are Left Behind." Oregon Center for Public Policy, 2023, [www.ocpp.org/2023/02/10/oregon-legislative-bottlenecks/](http://www.ocpp.org/2023/02/10/oregon-legislative-bottlenecks/).
- OLIS. "Oregon Legislative Information System." Oregon State Legislature, 2024, <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/>.

OPB Staff. "Constitutional Law Scholar on Likely Challenge to Oregon Walkout Measure." OPB, 26 May 2023, <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/05/26/oregon-walkout-measure-constitutional-challenge/>.

OPB Staff. "Oregon Legislative Walkout Continues Despite Law Aimed at Preventing Them." OPB, 16 May 2023, <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/05/16/oregon-legislative-walkout-continues-despite-law-aimed-at-preventing-them/>.

OPB Staff. "Oregon Voters Support Stricter Gun Laws." Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2023, [www.opb.org](http://www.opb.org).

Oregon Ballot Projects. "Oregon Measure 113: Consequences for Legislative Walkouts." Oregon Ballot Projects, 2023, [www.obp.org/oregon-measure-113](http://www.obp.org/oregon-measure-113).

Oregon Capital Chronicle. "Oregon Supreme Court Bars Republican Senators Who Participated in Walkout from Reelection." Oregon Capital Chronicle, 1 Feb. 2024, [oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2024/02/01/oregon-supreme-court-bars-republican-senators-who-participated-in-walkout-from-reelection](http://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2024/02/01/oregon-supreme-court-bars-republican-senators-who-participated-in-walkout-from-reelection).

Oregon Dispute Resolution Commission (ODRC). Annual Report. State of Oregon, 2021, <https://www.oregon.gov/odrc/Documents/AnnualReport2021.pdf>.

Oregon Department of Education. "Oregon State Literacy Report." Oregon Department of Education, 2022, [www.oregon.gov/ode](http://www.oregon.gov/ode).

Oregon Department of Forestry. "2020 Oregon Wildfire Impact Report." Oregon Department of Forestry, 2020, [www.oregon.gov/odf](http://www.oregon.gov/odf).

Oregon Forest Resources Institute. "Oregon Forestry Economic Contribution." Oregon Forest Resources Institute, 2021, [www.oregonforests.org](http://www.oregonforests.org).

Oregon Health Authority. "Firearm-Related Deaths in Oregon." Oregon Health Authority, 2023, [www.oregon.gov/oha](http://www.oregon.gov/oha).

Oregon Legislative Assembly. "Joint Committees." Oregon State Legislature, 2021, <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/committees>.

Oregon Legislative Assembly. "2023 Legislative Session: Bills in Review." Oregon Legislative Assembly, 2023, [www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills-received-2023](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills-received-2023).

Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office. "Oregon 2023–2025 Budget Overview." Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office, 2023, [www.oregonlegislature.gov](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov).

Oregon Legislature. "Clean Energy Jobs Work Groups." Oregon State Legislature, 2025, <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/committees/cejj>.

Oregon Legislature. "How an Idea Becomes Law." Oregon State Legislature, 2024, [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen\\_guide/Pages/howanideabecomeslaw.aspx](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_guide/Pages/howanideabecomeslaw.aspx).

Oregon Secretary of State. "Oregon County Voting Trends." Oregon Secretary of State, 2020, [www.oregonvotes.gov](http://www.oregonvotes.gov).

Oregon Senate Democrats. "DO YOUR JOB: Unconstitutional Walkout Undermines Government Transparency." Press Release, 31 May 2023, <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/senatedemocrats/Documents/DO%20YOUR%20JOB%20Unconstitutional%20Walkout%20Undermines%20Government%20Transparency.pdf>.

Oregon State Legislative Assembly. "2023 Session Bill Tracking." State of Oregon, 2023, <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1>.

Oregon State Legislative Review. "Committee Kill Zones and Legislative Bottlenecks." Oregon State University, 2021.

Oregon State Legislative Report. "Oregon Legislative Walkout of 2023." Oregon State Legislative Report, 2023, [www.oregonlegislature.gov](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov).

Oregon State Parks. "Rock Climbing at Smith Rock." Oregon State Parks, [www.oregonstateparks.org](http://www.oregonstateparks.org).

Oregon State University College of Forestry. "Oregon Forests and Wildfire Vulnerability." Oregon State University, 2021, [www.forestry.oregonstate.edu](http://www.forestry.oregonstate.edu).

ORS 171.134 – Readability Test for Legislative Digests and Summaries. Oregon Revised Statutes, [https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors\\_171.134](https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_171.134).

ORS 183.502. "Agency Authority to Use Alternative Means of Dispute Resolution." Oregon Revised Statutes, 2024, [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors183.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors183.html).

ORS 192. "Oregon Public Records Law." Oregon Revised Statutes, 2024, [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors192.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors192.html).

ORS 244.250. "Oregon Government Ethics Commission." Oregon Revised Statutes, 2024, [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors244.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors244.html).

ORS 276A.259. "Transparency Oregon Advisory Commission." Oregon Revised Statutes, 2024, [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors276A.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors276A.html).

ORS 36.100–36.245. "Mediation and Arbitration." Oregon Revised Statutes, 2024, [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors036.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors036.html).

PBS NewsHour. "Oregon's Longest State Legislative Walkout Enters Sixth Week." PBS, 14 June 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/oregons-longest-state-legislative-walkout-enters-sixth-week>.

Pew Charitable Trusts. "How Cross-Branch Collaboration Helps States Strengthen Evidence-Based Policymaking." Pew, 2022, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and->

[analysis/issue-briefs/2022/04/how-cross-branch-collaboration-helps-states-strengthen-evidence-based-policymaking.](#)

Pendleton Round-Up Association. "History of the Pendleton Round-Up." [www.pendletonroundup.com](http://www.pendletonroundup.com).

Politico Staff. "'Thank God They Walked Out': Oregon's Partisan Divide Highlights Heightened Animosity in Statehouses." Politico, 13 Dec. 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/12/13/oregon-walkout-partisan-divide-00132251>.

Rather, Dan, and Elliot Kirschner. What Unites Us: Reflections on Patriotism. Algonquin Books, 2017.

Readable. "Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level." Readable, <https://readable.com/readability/flesch-reading-ease-flesch-kincaid-grade-level/>.

Resolution Oregon. "Resolution Oregon | Home." Resolution Oregon, 2024, <https://www.resolutionoregon.org/>.

Spray, Carole. Legislative Protest as Disruptive Democratic Practice. Cambridge University Press, 2022.

State of Oregon. "Measure 113." Oregon Secretary of State, 2022, <https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/irr/2022/113text.pdf>.

StateScoop Staff. "Video Transparency Portal Widens Spotlight on California Legislators." StateScoop, 2021, <https://statescoop.com/california-legislature-video-transparency-portal/>.

Steel, Brent S., and Emily Mooney. "Oregon's 2024 Legislative Session and Budget: From Incivility to Civility." Oregon State University, 2024.

Stern NYU. "The Polarization Spiral." NYU Stern, 2024, <https://www.stern.nyu.edu/faculty-research/polarization-spiral>.

Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most. Penguin, 2010.

Thatcher, Kim. "Measure 113 and the Impact on Minority Voices." Oregon Senate Republican Press Release, 2022, [www.oregonrepublicans.org/113-minority-voices](http://www.oregonrepublicans.org/113-minority-voices).

The Guardian. "Oregon Legislative Walkout of 2023." The Guardian, 16 June 2023, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/16/republicans-end-longest-walkout-in-oregon-legislatures-history](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/16/republicans-end-longest-walkout-in-oregon-legislatures-history).

The Oregonian. "Climate Justice and Environmental Policy Deadlock: The Oregon Legislative Year in Review." The Oregonian, 2023, [www.oregonlive.com/oregon/2023/04/15](http://www.oregonlive.com/oregon/2023/04/15).

The Oregonian. "Oregon Lawmakers Make Deal to End Longest Legislative Walkout in State History." The Oregonian, 15 June 2023, [www.oregonlive.com/politics/2023/06/oregon-lawmakers-make-deal-to-end-longest-legislative-walkout-in-state-history.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2023/06/oregon-lawmakers-make-deal-to-end-longest-legislative-walkout-in-state-history.html).

The Oregonian Staff. "Oregon Lawmakers Make Deal to End Longest Legislative Walkout in State History." The Oregonian, 15 June 2023, <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2023/06/oregon-lawmakers-make-deal-to-end-longest-legislative-walkout-in-state-history.html>.

Tillamook Cheese. "About the Tillamook Cheese Factory." [www.tillamook.com](http://www.tillamook.com).

VanderHart, Dirk. "Oregon Senate Republicans Extend Walkout over Democratic Agenda." Oregon Public Broadcasting, 8 May 2023, <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/05/08/oregon-senate-republicans-extend-walkout-over-democratic-agenda/>.

Vanguardngr. "New Tech to Empower Africans to Track Laws, Influence Policy with AI Tools." Vanguard, 2025, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/01/new-tech-to-empower-africans-to-track-laws-influence-policy-with-ai-tools/>.

Wagner, Rob. "The Harmful Impact of Legislative Walkouts." Oregon State Senate Press Release, 2023, [www.oregonlegislature.gov](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov).

Wikipedia. "2019 Oregon Senate Republican Walkouts." Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 2024, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019\\_Oregon\\_Senate\\_Republican\\_walkouts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Oregon_Senate_Republican_walkouts).

Wikipedia. "Oregon Government Ethics Commission." Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 2024, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oregon\\_Government\\_Ethics\\_Commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oregon_Government_Ethics_Commission).

Willamette Valley Wineries Association. "Oregon Wine: A Rich Heritage." [www.willamettewines.com](http://www.willamettewines.com).

Williams, Sarah. Polarization and Power: The Role of Legislative Protest in American Politics. University of California Press, 2021.

Yamhill County. "Oregon Government Ethics Commission Information." Yamhill County, 2024, <https://www.co.yamhill.or.us/ogec>.

Zamore, Nathaniel. Oregon Political Landscape: Urban vs. Rural. Portland Press, 2023.

Zarkhin, Fedor, and Noelle Crombie. "Oregon Senate Republicans Stage Walkout, Blocking Quorum." The Oregonian, 16 May 2023, <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2023/05/oregon-senate-republicans-stage-walkout-blocking-quorum.html>.