

BALLOT

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gation and asking that certification of the election be delayed.

"I don't think (the matter) will go anywhere," Bascom said. "It must be looked into. You just can't bury it."

Bascom also said that a Eugene voter in Albany, N.Y., asked that the council look into the inordinately large number of absentee ballots sent to local addresses such as nursing homes. However, the council made no decision regarding the request.

Election results might be affected if absentee votes are disqualified. Out of the 10,357 ballots sent to voters, 7,678 were returned to Lane County Elections before the deadline. One outcome that may be discounted is the library bond measure.

The \$56 million general obligation bond, which would have helped pay for a new library and maintain public buildings, passed before absentee votes were counted. However, after the inclusion of the ballots, the bond lost by 336 votes.

Another election outcome that might be called into question is Steve Cornacchia's re-election as county commissioner. His narrow victory over Springfield

mayor Bill Morrisette was due to absentee ballots. Without the two absentee votes he received, another election would have been called.

"The council doesn't want to prejudge or jump to any conclusions," said Philip Weiler, public information specialist for the Eugene city manager's office. "I don't think at this point that any judge would throw out any or all of the ballots."

Lane County Elections will respond to the council's request but will not delay certification of the election.

"It is still our intention to certify the election," said Annette Newingham, chief deputy county clerk. "They can contest it in circuit court if they want."

The council has decided to wait until it is satisfied with the facts before taking any further action, Weiler said.

State law requires the election to be certified before 20 days after votes are cast. This means county officials only have until June 6 to certify the election results. Newingham said the law doesn't allow the county to delay certification for any reason.

The date of the election should have been on the ballot, Newingham said. In the past it was, she said, but state law is not clear on whether this is required.

ALCOHOL

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A sign boldly displayed in his store window warns minors and potential contributors to minors that police officers and OLCC officials may be posing as store employees. The sign was posted as part of the Cops in Shops program, which begins its "reverse sting" phase this weekend.

"We're doing an extra push right before Memorial Day," said Nancy Tharpe, a representative of Project Eugene, a century council coalition supported by brewers, vineyards, distillers and wholesalers.

With cooperation from the OLCC, Project Eugene and local police officials, Winn and other local store owners are pushing to stop minor alcohol purchases through Cops in Shops. The program was initiated last year after local convenience store owners approached law enforcement officials about the problems related to fake identifications and adults buying for minors.

"I really feel it's a needed program that will help the convenience store business as a whole," Winn said. "We are a target."

The program places plain-clothed officers in 110 Eugene stores which have identified illegal alcohol purchases as a growing concern. Officers could work at the cash register, stock store shelves or patrol areas outside the store for "shoulder tapping" — when minors wait outside while a contributing adult purchases alcoholic beverages.



Minors planning to illegally obtain alcohol might be caught by incognito Oregon Liquor Control Commission officers.

As soon as an officer spots a fake i.d. or witnesses a transaction between an adult and a minor, he or she will immediately take away identifications and arrest or cite violators, said O'Rourke. Those under the age of 21 also can be cited for a minor in possession just for carrying alcoholic beverages from a store cooler, he said.

O'Rourke said undercover police officers issued more than 145 tickets in a two-month period last summer.

"The program has been very effective," he said.

Winn said he has seen a drastic reduction in shoulder tapping since the program began last summer. He also has seen a reduction of fake identification usage, but realizes that the program can't stop all fake i.d.'s from passing through his store, he said.

"I'm sure it's out there and I'm

sure it's been used in our store," Winn said.

The undercover police officers, Winn said, help make employers more comfortable with checking identification. Some employees are intimidated into selling alcoholic beverages to minors, he said. Officers also train employees to better detect false identifications.

Looking for frayed edges, erasures and differences in typesetting are ways employees are taught to spot a fake i.d. Winn said another indication is whether a potential buyer is willing to take the identification out of his or her wallet.

Tharpe said Cops in Shops is a model program for the rest of the nation.

"We get calls every week from different cities wanting to start a program," she said.



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