

New bill promotes mail-in ballots

Robert Stephenson
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Secretary of State Phil Kiesling is sponsoring a bill that will allow voting in primary and general elections to be conducted by mail.

If the bill passes, Oregon will be the first state to accept mail-in ballots in both general and primary elections.

Kiesling has spent the last six years opposing similar bills and explains his sudden change of heart by saying "at a certain point we just have to recognize reality."

According to the State Elections Office had this law been in effect last November it would have saved the state of Oregon \$2.6 million. In the last election 265,000 Oregonians voted by absentee ballot, and only 38 percent of registered voters voted. Hopes are that this bill will greatly increase voter turnout, by not actually having to turnout to vote.

While there is no guarantee that the bill will have an effect on the turnout of Oregon voters,

recent history suggests it will. Since 1982, Oregon voters have been voting by mail in special elections and participation has grown at an outstanding rate, according to Senate elections committee.

Chairman of the Senate Rules and Elections Committee Sen. Randy Miller, R-Lake Oswego, ran against Kiesling in the 1992 Secretary of State race. Miller has been calling for this voter reform since 1989 and Kiesling has been opposing him. "I am real glad to see that he [Kiesling] has finally come around," said Miller in a phone interview, "but there is still opposition."

The League of Women Voters went on record in 1987 as saying a pilot project of voting by mail should remain in special elections, but not be applied to general or primary elections. Sally Weston, chairwomen for the leagues' Lane County Office said "our 1987 position is almost a decade old, and it has not been updated. The League will probably support the bill on a trial basis."

Other reforms sponsored by the secretary of state include a proposal to streamline the voters pamphlet. Kiesling wants to limit the number of pro and con arguments per measure. The driving force behind this proposal is financial. The voters pamphlet production and distribution costs approximately \$3,500 per page.

Sen. Miller commented on the proposal by saying "With the vast amount of measures that are continually on our elections, sometimes the voters pamphlet is the only source of knowledge voters have on a given issue. To limit the number of arguments would serve only to limit the amount of knowledge voters have. Furthermore, who gets to decide which pro and con arguments are good enough to be included and which ones are not. At \$3,500 dollars a page, it is the best buy in town."

If both of these bills pass, the next election should be an interesting one. More people will be voting, more conveniently, with less knowledge.

Best-selling author hosts mystery writing workshop

James Leong
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Twenty-two budding and accomplished writers got the chance to become mystery novelists for a day when they participated in a day-long writers' workshop conducted by best-selling author Doreen Roberts at Gateway Mall Saturday.

The workshop titled, "How to Put Suspense and Romance into Your Mystery," was organized by the Heart of Oregon Romance Writers. Participants learned how to put together a proposal for a mystery novel, the rules of a classic detective story, plotting a mystery series, the do's and don'ts of approaching a publisher.

Roberts encouraged participants to write mysteries because of their soaring popularity and ever-increasing

readership.

"The potential for sale of mysteries is there," Roberts said. "Although my royalty checks for mysteries are much less compared to romance, romance novels don't stay on the shelves for long. But when a reader picks up a mystery novel, chances are that he or she will go back to buy the rest of the series."

Because publishers get thousands of manuscripts a week but can only choose a few, Roberts stressed the importance of writing with a distinct voice.

Roberts has seen nine of her 12 romance novels reach the best seller's list at Waldenbooks, and has received several nominations from the Romantic Times awards, which are the equivalent of television's Emmy Awards.

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