

Candidates for Oregon secretary of state gear up

■ The race is heating up as three Republicans are fighting for the right to take on incumbent Bill Bradbury

By Josh Ryneal
Oregon Daily Emerald

Democratic incumbent Secretary of State Bill Bradbury and three Republican challengers are all looking to overhaul the Oregon office. Bradbury is running unopposed in the May 16 primary, and only the victorious Republican will move on to face Bradbury in November's general election.

The secretary of state assists with the management of state lands and audits state programs and agencies. The office is also responsible for overseeing state elections.

Rep. Lynn Snodgrass, R-Portland; Rep. Lynn Lundquist, R-Baker; and electrical engineer Paul Damian Wells are all running on the Republican ticket and hope to use the office to reform Oregon elections.

Snodgrass, the Oregon speaker of the house, wants to use the office to remedy voter apathy among college-age Oregonians and to encourage those already registered to vote in future elections.

If elected, Snodgrass said she would appoint a youth council composed of 18- to 30-year-olds to investigate the issue and have that group report back to her and recommend solutions.

Snodgrass said she would also streamline the secretary of state's audit division to eliminate inefficiency and improve its credibility among state agencies.

Under her plan, the secretary of state's office would conduct an exhaustive audit of itself and then use that information to improve the auditing process of other programs and agencies.

"By asking employees their opinions

about what is wasteful and redundant, [the process] becomes less hostile," Snodgrass said.

Lundquist, a rancher, businessman and current state representative, sees a "crying need for leadership" in the secretary of state's office.

His campaign platform also includes plans to increase voter turnout. To accomplish this, Lundquist said, he would push for schools to teach mandatory civics courses in schools to "increase awareness of government and how it functions" and get children engaged in the voting process at an early age.

"I remember patriotism and civic duty being taught when I went to school, but it's not out there now," he said.

Revamping the audit process is also part of Lundquist's plans.

"My goal would be to inform taxpayers of what they exactly receive for every tax dollar spent," he said.

Lundquist said he would establish six councils of private citizens to work with agencies and help determine when and where to perform an audit.

He said he would also reform the office's stewardship of state-owned lands.

The secretary of state works with the governor and state treasurer to manage state-owned lands for the Common School Fund, a trust that uses revenue from unclaimed property and taxes to help fund Oregon schools.



BRADBURY



LUNDQUIST



SNODGRASS



WELLS

Currently, 5 percent of the fund's total value is distributed to schools, but Lundquist would propose an increase to 6 percent, with one-half used for the operation of schools and the other put into a security fund.

"If the economy takes a downturn, that security fund can be used to help get us through rough times," Lundquist said.

Wells, independent of party and a voting rights advocate from Newberg, has registered himself as a Republican to push for elections reform in Oregon.

He has run for governor, secretary of state and the U.S. Senate, each time switching his party affiliation between Republican and Democrat. The reason for his actions, Wells said, is that independent candidates must collect 36,000 signatures to get on an election ballot, while major party candidates only need 1,000.

Wells used the space available to him in the Voter's Pamphlet to appeal for voters' support in opening closed election primaries.

"You just can't lock out 25 percent of the voters," Wells said.

Despite his laid-back campaign, Wells received 35 percent of the vote in the 1996 Re-

publican primary for secretary of state.

"I guess people liked what I was saying," he said.

Bradbury, who was appointed by Gov. John Kitzhaber to finish Secretary Phil Keisling's term, said that he is committed to "maintaining the integrity of the elections process."

Concerned about low voter turnouts in past elections, Bradbury said he would like to see the highest voter turnout in the country in the November 2000 elections. To achieve this, Bradbury's office created www.oregonvotes.com, a voter information Web site with links to various voter outreach programs around the state.

He also said that he would work to increase voter registration among minorities.

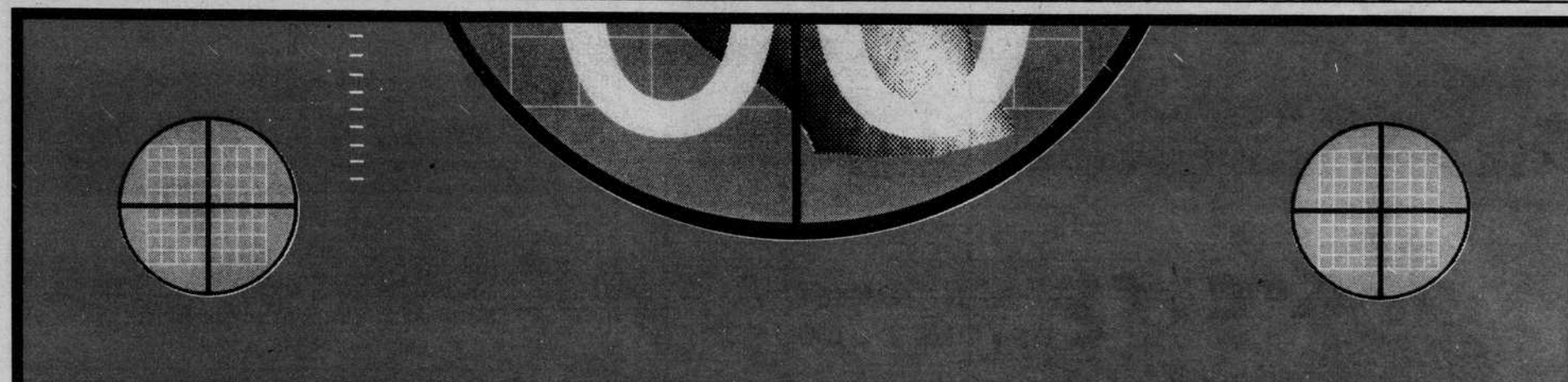
Bradbury served in the private sector as executive director of For the Sake of the Salmon, a non-profit organization dedicated to salmon preservation. He said that he would bring the same leadership to the secretary of state office.

"Being secretary of state is about integrity, accountability and service," Bradbury said.

Bradbury said that he "will continue to uphold these ideas if I keep my job as secretary."



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