

GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

Wyden seeks more security for elections

By Mike McNally

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden has proposed legislation to require states to use paper ballots and to employ audits to ensure that hackers have not meddled with election results. The bill is a logical extension of Wyden's longtime efforts to expand Oregon's vote-by-mail system to the entire nation.

The continued specter of meddling by hackers and foreign governments in U.S. elections lends the issue added urgency — especially as experts warn the 2018 midterm elections have already been targeted by those eager to exploit weaknesses in our electoral systems.

Wyden's bill is dubbed the Protecting American Votes and Elections Act of 2018. According to a press release from Wyden's office, paper ballots and statistically rigorous audits are two steps election experts say are necessary to give voters confidence election results have not been changed by foreign governments or other hackers.

Currently, Wyden said, 22 states do not require any post-election audits and many other states merely require recounts in a few precincts.

Since Wyden's bill was introduced in June, it's picked up support from a number of other senators and groups such as Common Cause. But the bill still is a long shot to pick up much traction in Congress, in part because all the support in the Senate appears to be coming from Democrats at this point — and especially considering that a somewhat similar bill, which did have bipartisan support at one point, has just collapsed.

That bill, dubbed the Secure Elections Act, was introduced by two senators, Amy Klobuchar, a Minnesota Democrat, and James Lankford, a Republican from Oklahoma. It would require states to use backup paper ballots and to implement postelection audits to ensure voting systems were not compromised. According to a recent story in *The New York Times* about the bill, it also would establish clear lines of communication between state election officials, the Department of Homeland Security and voting machine vendors.

But as the Secure Elections Act made its way through Congress, opposition emerged: Republicans said the measure oversteps congressional authority. The White House said the bill violates states' rights. State elections officials worried about shouldering additional costs. The bill is not exactly dead, but it is not expected to reach the floor of the Senate any time soon.

Some of the points opponents made about the bill have merit. For starters, states need to maintain control over their elections. This is not a duty that the federal government should assume. But the federal government can — and should — provide encouragement and assistance to states to help them safeguard their election infrastructure.

Maybe Wyden's proposal can beat the odds and gather some momentum. Or maybe his efforts can give a useful boost to the Secure Elections Act. But one thing is clear: More must be done to safeguard elections in the United States from those who are at work right now to undermine them.



"IF IT'S ANY HELP, I WOULD RULE IN FAVOR OF THE CHAIRMAN..."

Your views

Christie: Looks like an uncooperative co-op to me

To the Editor:

Someone once noted that "the whole point of good propaganda" is that "you want to create a slogan that nobody's going to be against. ... Nobody knows what it means, because it doesn't mean anything. It's crucial that it diverts your attention from a question that does mean something. ..."

Which brings me to the August 2018 issue of OTEC's *Ruralite*. Nestled among articles on county fairs and photographs of dead people, and ads shilling vinegar as a miracle cure, was an article offering slogans aplenty and another highlighting the D.C. Youth Tour. These were meant to burnish the reputation of OTEC as a community-minded citizen, but careful reading reveals just empty slogans and half-truths.

The article "It's a Matter of Principles" contained seven warm and fuzzy headliner slogans, but I'll concentrate on the first: "The Power of Membership," with translations along the way, "local members call the shots" if you can get through all the obstacles for getting elected as a well-paid director; they will have to listen to you, otherwise forget it. "We are accessible. You can call or email us and know someone here is listening" — of course they listen, but they don't have to respond, especially if you ask essential questions pertaining to rate studies or employee compensation.

Directors "have only two things in mind: ... keeping the lights on and keeping costs affordable" — except for bloated administrative salaries and pet projects like sending well-heeled teens to lobby in D.C., which despite OTEC's repeated statements, does affect rates. Every penny

spent on pet projects could have been spent on capital projects like substations.

Speaking of rates, OTEC's were not raised but Idaho Power's residential rates decreased by 3.27 percent recently, so many OTEC members would still be better off with Idaho Power.

As for my enquiries, OTEC would not even provide critical information needed to understand whether it is treating all classes of ratepayers fairly or whether total compensation for various positions is adequate or extravagant. So no, as a member you don't call the shots, and your power is very limited. Looks like the uncooperative co-op to me.

Christopher Christie
Baker City

Mead: Walden's comments on Farm Bill are a 'shell game'

To the Editor:

These are direct quotes from a Walden newsletter: "Our airsheds are choked and smoke blankets our communities, giving us some of the worst air quality in the world this summer."

"As Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, I announced that we are going to hold a hearing this fall to examine the health consequences of the smoke from these fires and explore the various contributing factors, from climate change to overstocked forests. This hearing will serve as an opportunity to address the current state of our forests and what policy changes need to be made."

"And after fires, we should remove the burned, dead trees — where appropriate and while they still have value — and use the proceeds to pay for replanting a new, healthy forest for the next generation. That's called stewardship, and that's what happens on pri-

vate, county and state lands. These needed reforms were included in the Farm Bill that passed the House earlier this year with my support."

Here is a direct quote from the Farm Bill: "Sec. 8402. Authorization of Appropriations For Hazardous Fuel Reduction On Federal Land. Section 108 of the Healthy Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6518) is amended by striking \$760,000,000 for each fiscal year and inserting \$660,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023."

Walden's idea of management is: "The Republican Farm Bill would require the Forest Service to burn dead trees after a fire, where appropriate, and then replant at least 75 percent of the burned areas." He attempts to make it sound as if he is producing new funding rather than merely juggling the existing budget to fit his view point. It is a shell game attempting to sound like sound decision while actually cutting the FS Budget.

Walden has a hard time telling smoke from grass fires apart from that of a timber fire. But, of course, in his mind, it is all "the Forest Service's fault."

George Mead
La Grande

Barry: McLeod-Skinner beats Walden 10-1 on small donor support

To the Editor:

Poor Walden. Almost 60 percent of his support is from PACs, political committees designed to elect candidates chosen by big corporations and special interests to represent them in Washington. That means 60 percent of his funding comes from people who can't vote for him. They're D.C. lobbyists paid to persuade you to vote for Walden so he will serve their interests, like the pharmaceu-

tical industry, his largest supporter, which is counting on him to keep your drug prices high. Walden may be winning the PAC competition, but he's way behind with the voters of his district.

Small individual donors, those who have donated less than \$200, make up less than 4 percent of Walden's support. That means 96 percent of the average-income voters who actually live in Congressional District 2, the folks whose letters haven't been answered and whose concerns have been ignored, aren't interested enough in Walden to send him even \$10. After wondering "Where's Walden?" for years, they've learned their District is not being represented in Washington.

On the other hand, well over 50 percent of Jamie McLeod-Skinner's support comes from small individual donors. These people don't have money to spare, but they're giving what they can and also giving their time, knocking on doors, making phone calls. They're on the ground marching in local parades to support Jamie. She lives her campaign slogans: "People before party" and "Decency is bipartisan." She shows up. She listens. She answers every question without ducking the tough ones.

Jamie realizes that this campaign is about people versus money. She chooses people, not commitment to big-money interests. Walden wouldn't know what to do with a homeless person. Jamie plunks herself down on the curb beside them for a chat. We need a thinker and a doer. A person of integrity who is prepared to serve each resident of CD2. Her education, government and overseas experience are impressive. Check out her website at JamieForOregon.com.

Lois Barry
La Grande

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