

# VOTING

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450,000 didn't vote in the smaller counties.

True, Brown did win Multnomah County, the state's largest, by almost 200,000 votes. Multnomah, though, voted above the state percentage at nearly 71%, with more than 378,000 ballots cast. The three counties that gave Brown the most votes all performed higher than the statewide mark.

Conversely, in the five counties Buehler won, just two — Deschutes and Clackamas — were above the state average, and both Linn and Marion were under 63%.

Locally, Union County also underperformed, voting at a 65.5% clip in 2018, with 6,190 voters out of 17,946 not casting a ballot in that election. Walla Walla County was at 72%.

"Everyone talks about



The Bulletin, File

Higher turnout from rural voters in 2018 in Oregon could have cut down Gov. Kate Brown's margin of victory to a sliver.

this race as the race that discourages them from ever voting again," Church said, adding she personally knows 10 people who didn't take part in the midterm.

Are there enough voters in the smaller areas of the state to make a serious impact? Here's a look at that 2018 election as an example: What would it have taken to swing that election? If more ballots

were cast in smaller counties, and everything else remained the same, could it have flipped? And could that matter in elections next month?

The largest counties had a higher turnout in 2018, at 69.8% to 65.7%. By the 32 smaller counties — everyone except Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Lane — simply turning out at the same rate



The Bulletin, File

Knut Buehler had a shot at defeating Kate Brown in the 2018 race for governor, but he needed much higher voter turnout from Oregon's counties with smaller populations.

as the biggest four, about 54,000 more people would have voted. Had the margin of Buehler's lead in those counties held the same (he pulled in 54.21% compared to Brown's 37.96%), Brown's overall win would still be well intact but would have been trimmed by about 9,000 votes.

The gap narrows the higher the voter turnout is. While it's a percentage typ-

ically unseen in elections today, if the smaller counties turned out at 85%, and the voting margins were the exact same, that would bring out more than 1.1 million voters from those counties — or 100,000 more than the big counties. Brown still would win, but rather than a win of nearly 120,000 votes, the difference would be less than 79,000 votes.

What numbers would, in theory, have pushed Buehler over the top? Claiming more of the voters in areas he won.

Though he ran as a Republican, Buehler's pro-choice stance hurt his chances within his own party. Brown's margin in the key large counties was nearly 26 percentage points — 60.46% to 34.56%. What if Buehler did close to that in his stronger areas of the state? Continuing the look at the smaller counties, an 85% turnout with him receiving 60% of the vote (and Brown the same 37.96%) clips the margin to less than 14,000.

And an increase of his vote reception to 61.3% would give him a margin in those counties of 260,625 — enough to edge Brown by 624 votes.

"They just can't tell me that that 100,000 voters makes that much difference," Church said of the rural-vs-urban split.

# COUNCIL

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unless they have affordable housing for their workforce," Dutto said.

The councilor said she would be willing to have the council take steps like changing building codes to make it easier to build.

Dutto also is interested in working to help the city continue improving access for those with mobility issues, including creating more curb cuts for wheelchair access. Dutto said she has an enhanced appreciation of this need because she is a physical therapist.

Dutto touted the council's achievement of revamping the allocation of Urban Renewal Agency

## MORE LA GRANDE CITY COUNCIL RACE COVERAGE

Four seats are up for election on the La Grande city council. They include Position 3, where Dr. David Glabe is challenging incumbent Corrine Dutto, and Position 4, where incumbent Mary Ann Miesner faces a challenge from Kristine Alf Rippee. Thursday's edition of The Observer will have a feature on that contest. Future editions will have articles on the candidates for the other two races.

money for new business. Due to new rules, she said, the URA funding is clearer and more objective.

She also said she is delighted with the installation of the new sidewalk at Central Elementary School. The sidewalk runs from Second Street and H Avenue west to Sunset Drive. Dutto, who worked hard for the sidewalk, said it makes it safer for children to walk to and from

Central and for parents to pick up and drop off their children.

While La Grande City Council positions are non-partisan, Dutto, fellow councilor Nicole Howard and Mayor Steve Clements were the subjects of a recent accusatory rant on the website for the Union County Republican Central Committee based on their registration as Democrats. Dutto said political

partisanship does not influence her when it comes to making decisions on the council.

"I do not vote on issues based on my personal preferences or on what any group tells me how to vote," she said. "I try to view each issue before the council objectively and vote according to what I think is best for the community. I think it is important to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars. I do my research on each issue and listen to public input. I use data to support my choices, not emotion."

However, she continued, "impassioned public input" has altered how she voted, which she said shows she is following the will of the people.

"I try to be fair and transparent in my decisions," Dutto said.

Glabe said he has concerns about the recent Republican involvement in La Grande city council races, but he does believe information on the party affiliation of a candidate could be beneficial to voters because it gives voters some information about the candidate.

"I firmly believe that respectful and civil discourse regarding issues and values is the most favor-

able way for voters to determine who will represent them best," Glabe said. "I do support the utilization of endorsements by individuals, organizations and even political parties as a way of informing voters of personal beliefs and political views, which are relevant to all levels of government. This helps provide valuable information to voters who wish to be represented by people who share similar values and philosophies, even in a non-partisan local election."



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Outlined in blue painters tape, the design of the Wallowa Mountains takes shape on the Joseph Charter School gym floor Friday, Oct. 2, 2020, as graphic artist Rondell Puckett works on Chief Joseph Mountain and floor contractor Matt Jerman measures off the basketball foul line.

# JOSEPH

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The gym's new LED lights are brighter than before. And they will illuminate a gym floor that is a work of art.

Boise, Idaho, graphic artist Rondell Puckett is creating an image of the Wallowa Mountains on the "home" side of the gym floor. The design, envisioned by basketball coach Olan Fulfer, includes a sweeping vista of Chief Joseph Mountain, Bonneville, Sawtooth and much of the rest of the range. The JCS Eagle will occupy center court.

"The floor design looks great and we are excited to get it done," Homan said.

"It's art," Puckett said. "I looked at the mountains and thought 'wow' and then went into art mode. So it won't look exactly like a detailed photograph of the mountains. But people will recognize them. It's going to be amazing."

Puckett has outlined the snow-capped peaks in blue

painter's masking tape. This week, Matt Jerman, who works for his son's flooring company that is installing the new gym floor, will apply a darker brown wood stain to the lower parts of the mountains. The snow-capped white will be applied as paint after the first two coats of sealant have been applied to what is now sanded, high-quality maple.

"If we just applied the paint to the unfinished floor," Jerman said, "it wouldn't come off very well if we ever had to refinish the floor. So we usually put paint down after we've done the first coats of varnish. Then we'll come back and apply the last coats of shellac and polish the floor after everything else is done. It will look like a mirror," he said.

Puckett has done one other gym floor at Meridian, Idaho. It, too, had a mountain scene. Company owner Alan Jerman asked him to do the gym floor when he learned that the Wallowas

were an integral part of the JCS landscape.

"A lot of my work has been paintings on trucks and motorcycles, and doing regular paintings," Puckett said. "I love art. I get lost in a project. I just want to do it all the time."

The work remaining in the gym includes installing the bleachers, equipping the weight room and finishing painting the stairwells and stairs that lead to the weight room, as well as painting the downstairs storage areas and installing interior doors.

Portions of the original floor were salvaged and will be used for JCS woodshop projects.

"You know with everything this year, we are not going to put any expectations on final completion. We can see the end and we are getting more excited with each passing day," Homan said.

Matt Jerman said that people have been dropping by to check on the projects' progress.

"Every day maybe five or ten people sort of walk in to see how things are

going," he said. "The community is really interested in this. I think they are going to be pleased."

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