

Poll: Drazan, Tiernan emerge as front-runners in Republican primary

By **JAMIE GOLDBERG**
The Oregonian

PORTLAND — Former House Republican Leader Christine Drazan and former state lawmaker Bob Tiernan have emerged as frontrunners among the huge field of Republican candidates for Oregon governor with just two weeks left before the May 17 primary.

Nearly 19% of likely Republican voters picked Drazan, of Oregon City, as the candidate they would choose or were leaning toward for the Republican nominee in a poll conducted by Nelson Research that was released Wednesday, May 4. Tiernan, who has worked as a corporate turnaround consultant and owns a home in Lake Oswego, drew 14% support.

Given the poll's margin of error, 4.3%, that put the two in a statistical tie, with more than a fourth of respondents, 27.4%, still undecided.

Bud Pierce, a cancer doctor from Salem who was the Republican gubernatorial nominee in 2016, received 9.5%. The poll was the first to be publicly released this year that did not show Pierce with the highest share of likely Republican voters' support.

The most recent of those, also by Nelson Research, found Pierce had 11% support and Drazan 8% in mid-April.

In the new poll, conducted April 29 through May 2, three other candidates received more than 5% support. Sandy Mayor and insurance executive Stan Pulliam received 6.9%, while former small-town superintendent Marc Thielman and Baker City Mayor Kerry McQuisten both received 5.9%.

Nineteen Republicans filed to run for governor this year, which could lead to voters selecting their



Drazan



McQuisten



Pierce



Pulliam



Thielman



Tiernan

nominee by a slim margin, The Oregonian/OregonLive has reported.

The survey of 514 likely Republican primary voters, conducted by telephone and online, was paid for by Public Affairs Counsel, a lobbying firm whose principal J.L. Wilson owns Nelson Research.

Both Drazan and Tiernan have gained significant support since Nelson Research's last poll. The former House Republican leader gained an additional 10.7 percentage points of support, while Tiernan surged by 8.8 percentage points.

Drazan has reported raising nearly \$2.5 million since January 2021 and spending nearly \$2 million. She reported spending nearly \$900,000 in April, most of it for TV ads. She spent more in the first four weeks of April than in the three previous months.

Tiernan has also poured money into an ad blitz that has helped to put him in the leading pack. He has reported spending more than \$1 million and raising nearly \$1.3 million, including a \$500,000 personal loan.

Early voter turnout on pace to meet midterms average

Just over 70,000 ballots returned so far for primary

By **SAM STITES**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Oregon voters are taking their time in marking primary election ballots before returning them for free via the U.S. Postal Service or at official drop boxes.

At least, that's what the data released by the Oregon elections division on Wednesday, May 4, suggests, with just 2.4% of ballots returned statewide. That's on pace with Oregon's number from the 2018 primary election, in which 2.5% of ballots had been returned by this same point.

Of the nearly 3 million ballots sent to registered voters over the last week and a half, just over 70,000 have been returned.

Voters have until Tuesday, May 17, to either mail or physically return their ballot.

"What we are seeing is in line with previous primary elections," said Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, who oversees all elections in Oregon.

"Voter turnout is generally high in Oregon thanks to our modern and convenient vote by mail system," she said. "Oregonians are voters."

Data compiled by the Bipartisan Policy Center — a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit research group — shows that Oregonians do turn out well above the national average in both midterm and presidential elections. (Midterm elections take place two years between presidential elections and are typically dom-

inated by congressional races for the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, as well as state offices such as governor.)

In the 2018 primary election, 27% of all Oregonians 18 years of age or older returned a ballot, while the country averaged just 19%. Both those numbers were up from the 2014 primary.

Oregon's historical turnout in midterm primaries improves when looking at only registered voters. In 2018, 34% of those who received a ballot returned them, a slight drop from 36% in 2014.

Elections officials and pollsters both say it's hard to gauge what turnout will truly look like once the election is complete — Oregonians have only begun to see the expected flood of TV ads and mailers — but trust the state's electorate to be fairly predictable in this primary at around 34% turnout.

Some smaller counties are showing higher early turnout percentages — such as Wheeler County at 9.8% and Gilliam County at 7.4% — simply due to lower numbers of registered voters. For example, Wheeler County has 109 returned ballots but only 1,110 registered voters.

In the Portland metro region, Washington and Clackamas counties lag slightly behind at 1.7% (6,443 ballots) and 1.8% (5,567 ballots), respectively.

Daily vote count data from the 2018 primary compiled by Multnomah County shows turnout significantly up after the first week following ballots being mailed, jumping from a daily average of about 20,000 ballots returned the first week to 69,000 ballots in the week leading up to the election.

Most GOP gubernatorial candidates applaud possible abortion restrictions

By **SAM STITES**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

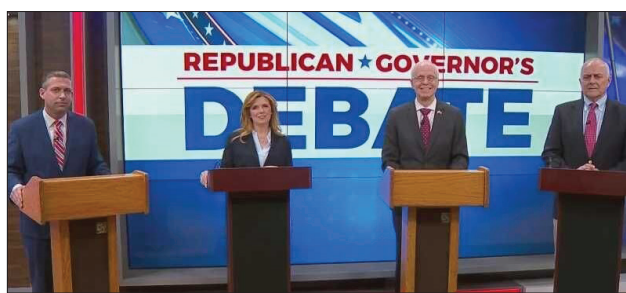
SALEM — Oregon leaders often praise the state's strong protection of reproductive rights, which is codified in state law. But most of the Republican candidates for governor say they would work to reduce those protections if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade.

In responses to a candidate questionnaire sent this spring by OPB, five candidates — Stan Pulliam, Bob Tiernan, Bridge Barton, Amber Richardson and Bill Sizemore — said they would pursue new restrictions on abortions in Oregon. None went into depth about what that would look like.

Four others — Court Boice, Tim McCloud, Brandon Merritt and Nick Hess — said they would support a voter referendum to remove abortion protections within Oregon's constitution.

Only one, Jessica Gomez, the founder and CEO of Rogue Valley Microdevices, said she wouldn't pursue any new restrictions on reproductive health.

And in a debate hosted Tuesday, May 3, by the City Club of Portland and KGW, the topic of what happens if Roe goes away emerged as one of the cardinal issues for the GOP candidates. They spent more than 10 minutes of the 90-minute forum



KOIN 6 News/Contributed Photo, File

Republican gubernatorial hopefuls, from left, Stan Pulliam, Christine Drazan, Bud Pierce and Bob Tiernan take part in a televised debate Thursday, April 28, 2022.

debating news that the U.S. Supreme Court might be on the verge of overturning the Roe decision and the impact in Oregon.

Four front-runners — Gomez, Bud Pierce, Pulliam and Barton — were asked what the possible new decision means for their plans as governor.

Gomez doubled down, saying she's firmly "pro-choice" and stands behind abortion being a constitutionally protected right. She does, however, stand against using Oregon tax dollars to help pregnant people from other states access abortions here.

Pierce, an oncologist and 2016 GOP nominee, described himself as "pro-life," but said he believes in obeying federal and state law and would rather focus efforts on supporting pregnant people with child care and education so they feel less pressure to pursue an abortion.

"My effort will be on supporting women who are pregnant so that they'll want to continue

their pregnancy if they so desire," Pierce said.

Pierce was pressed in the debate for what a moderator described as "flip-flopping" on the question of abortion; in his 2016 campaign, he said he supported the state's policies of access to reproductive health care. Pierce said he did not flip flop, but reevaluated his position following his wife's 2020 death.

Barton, a conservative author and political consultant, said she supports the high court's apparent forthcoming decision, and disagrees with the state's current policies.

She said she'd walk back funding set aside by the Oregon Legislature that helps people in Oregon and from other states access abortions here. State lawmakers recently approved \$15 million for the state's Reproductive Health Equity Fund in response to new laws or efforts to restrict access in states like Texas, Idaho, Missis-

sippi and Florida. "Millions of dollars (are) allocated for what we're now referring to as 'abortion vacations' for people outside the state to come in here and use our taxpayer dollars for their abortions," she said. "Most Oregonians I believe don't agree with that."

Pulliam, the mayor of Sandy, offered the most aggressive opinion in terms of restricting access to abortion. He released a statement May 3 saying, "I've waited for this moment my whole life."

In the debate, he attacked his opponents for being, in his view, too progressive on their views on reproductive rights. He noted that he was not endorsed by the advocacy group Oregon Right to Life, which endorsed four other candidates: Pierce, former House Minority Leader Christine Drazan, Barton and Tiernan.

"I hope Oregon Right to Life, their board, their funders, and activists are watching this debate," he said. "These answers are a complete embarrassment for anyone who's received the Oregon Right to Life endorsement."

Pulliam said he would sign any "pro-life piece of legislation." (The chances of such legislation reaching any governor's desk remain quite slim given the Democratic Party's firm hold on both chambers of the Oregon Legislature.)

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