

The Oregon Secretary of State has a new Web site available so that voters can verify that they are, in fact, registered to vote. You can check the status of your family and friends, too. All you need is a name, zip code, and birthday. To check your voter registration, go to:
<https://secure.sos.state.or.us/eim/vr/showVoterSearch.do>



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Ballot Measure 65

Labor opposes 'top two' primary

This year, ballot measures sponsored by longtime labor foe Bill Sizemore and conservative activist Kevin Mannix are staring down at organized labor like a partly-loaded pistol. Measures 58 through 64 run the gamut of budget-busting mandatory sentences to tax cuts to the richest taxpayers to muzzles for public employee unions.

With unions campaigning to oppose those measures, other measures at the beginning and end of the ballot aren't getting as much attention. But labor organizations are taking sides on those as well — supporting two of the legislative referrals on the ballot, and opposing an initiative that would change Oregon politics. The referrals are Measure 56 and Measure 57. The initiative is Measure 65.

Measure 56 would get rid of the "double majority" requirement that dooms many local school and fire district levies. Under the double majority, which passed as part of a 1996 ballot measure authored by Sizemore, local property tax measures on the ballot in May elections cannot pass unless the majority of a district's registered voters cast ballots, and a majority of those are in favor. But that's considered undemocratic because non-voters can doom a levy even when voters approve it by a wide margin.

Measure 57 is an alternative to Measure 61, one of the two Mannix measures. Measure 61 would institute mandatory minimum sentences for certain property crimes. Measure 57, the alternative, would increase sentences, but leave discretion in the hands of judges and prosecutors, and ensure that addicts get treatment while incarcerated.

Measure 65, meanwhile, would radically change Oregon elections in ways that — most labor leaders have concluded — are not in the interests of

working people. It's opposed by the Oregon AFL-CIO, the Oregon Education Association, the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council and most union locals. Labor's main criticism of the measure is that it would make it harder for non-wealthy people to run for office.

Measure 65 would institute the "top two" primary. No longer would the primary be the way Democrats and Republicans select who they want to nominate in the general election. Instead, all voters would choose among all candidates from all parties. The top two vote-getters would then square off in the general election, even if they are members of the same party. The measure would also eliminate the right of minor parties to place nominees on the general election ballot.

"It's going to cost labor a lot more," said Bob Shiprack, executive secretary of the Oregon Building and Construction Trades Council. "I can't see one thing in this ballot measure that convinces me it's a good idea."

Measure 65 could make elections more expensive in several ways. First, races that are now basically settled in May would drag out to November. In districts that lean strongly Democratic or Republican, whoever wins the May primary under the current system is fairly assured of victory in November.

Michael Dembrow is a good example. A union activist leader within the American Federation of Teachers, Dembrow won the Democratic primary for House District 45. Because the Northeast Portland district leans strongly Democratic, Dembrow is almost assured election in November.

But what if Oregon had the top-two primary? Dembrow would have to have taken twice as much time off from his job as an instructor at Portland Community College, and run not one but

two strenuous campaigns. Dembrow says he probably would not have run if that had been the case.

The price tag would also have gone up for the union political committees that support Dembrow's election. Not only would they have to fund two campaigns, but they would have had to mail to a greater number of voters in the primary — not just Democrats.

It's notable, says Oregon AFSCME Council 75 political coordinator Joe Baessler, that most of the backers of the measure are CEOs and deep-pocketed business groups. Baessler said the measure has the support of middle-of-the-road political figures because they think it will result in the election of more moderates. In party primaries, candidates must first appeal to members of the party; in a top-two primary, the candidate would need to compete for all votes from the get-go.

**Columbia-Pacific Building & Construction Trades Council
Endorsements for the
Nov. 4 General Election**

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MULTNOMAH COUNTY
Commissioner # 3
JUDY SHIPRACK
Commissioner # 4
CARLA PILUSO

COLUMBIA COUNTY
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Commissioner #3
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Commissioner #2
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CLATSOP COUNTY
Commissioner #2
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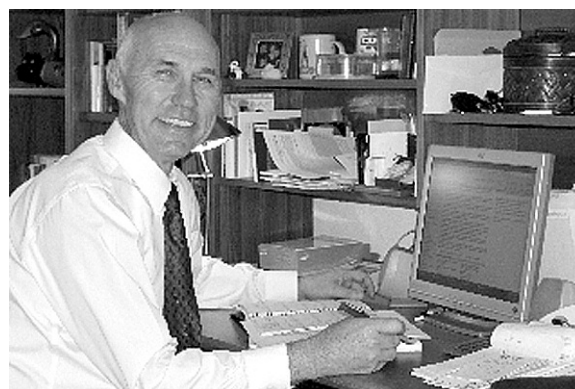
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Columbia County Commissioner

Position 1

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- Oregon School Employees Association, St. Helens Chapter 31
- Oregon School Employees Association, Clatskanie Chapter 53
- Northwest Oregon Labor Council
- Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council
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