

VOTES REJECTED IN PRIMARY

Dan Wathen voted in the May primary, but Lane County Elections didn't count his ballot.

Wathen said he got a letter from the county after the election saying that his ballot was rejected because the signature on the ballot allegedly did not match the signature on his voter registration card.

Asked how often this happens, County Elections Manager Roxann Marshall said, "I don't know."

"That's a big red flag," said Wathen when told of the response. "It's shocking to me that they don't seem to know what they are doing over there," he said. "Maybe it's a few people, or maybe it's a big crowd of them," he said. "It makes you wonder."

"It's not very many," Marshall said. She said less than 10 percent of ballots cast were rejected for mismatched signatures, but she wouldn't say if the number was less than 1 percent. "I can't give you a percentage."

She said she wouldn't be able to determine the percentage for past elections or the May election without doing some research. "I'm still tabulating ballots, and that's my priority now," Marshall said she didn't know whether or when she would ever be able to supply the information.

State Elections Division spokesman Tom Hamilton said signatures are rejected "infrequently," but "it's not unusual at all."

According to a 2005 study by Reed College and the Carter Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform, state elections officials rejected 1,057 ballots in 2004 for mismatched signatures.

This primary had record turnout, and inexperienced voter errors could have resulted in higher numbers of signature rejections. It also had several very close local elections, including the mayoral race in Eugene, in which Mayor Kitty Piercy fell 1 percent short of winning re-election without a runoff.

Marshall said this year was also different in that her elections workers took a training class on signature verification.

Wathen, a disabled veteran, said he understood from a letter and by calling the elections office that he could have come in quickly and given his signature again and had his vote counted. But he said he didn't have time, and after the election results were announced, the issue appeared moot.

Wathen said he's concerned that elections officials could identify likely votes by addresses and party registrations and reject signatures based on their political bias. "It makes you wonder."

He said he's signed thousands of documents in his life and has never had his signature rejected.

"I was upset about it," Wathen said. "It sort of defeats the whole purpose that somebody can just randomly roll over you like that." — Alan Pittman

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

An estimated 50 to 60 participants gathered at Sam Bond's May 28 for Lane Bus Project and Eugene Weekly's "Brewhaha" monthly political forum.

Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson kicked things off by presenting on Voter Owned Elections (such as Portland instituted this last election cycle). VOE would require candidates to "collect a large number of \$5 qualifying contributions to demonstrate community support," "reject private money contributions," "limit campaign spending" and "agree to comply with strict administrative rules." In return, candidates would receive public financing to run their campaign. Recently, Portland mayoral candidate Sho Dozono had his public funds withdrawn because his \$27,295 in private contributions broke the \$12,000 limit. Dozono lost the race to Sam Adams, who refused public financing and spent more than \$200,000 on his campaign.

The participants then broke into small groups to debate the merits of such a system. After about 30 minutes of discussion, Bus Project leaders reported the group's comments and concerns. Some worried that politicians needing quick \$5 contributions would primarily stick to dense urban areas, neglecting the rural constituency altogether. Others speculated that the rule would make running for office similar to applying for a job, where merits trumped flashy, expensive resumes. One commenter thought politicians "become corrupt" in office, and so a change to the election process would do little good.

The second half of the evening had Tyrone Reitman, co-director of Healthy Democracy Oregon, explaining Citizens' Initiative Review. Reitman talked about how easy it is in Oregon to get an initiative on the ballot even if it does more harm than good to Oregonians' way of life.

The CIR, Reitman says, would decide whether a ballot measure actually does what its supporters say it will and whether the measure is a comprehensive solution to a statewide problem. The review board would be made up of 18 to 24 citizens selected at random from all over the state, representing a "microcosm of Oregon in terms of age, education, partisan affiliation and residence." After hearing three to five days of testimony on the measure, the board members (who would be paid for their service) would summarize their findings in a one-page report to be printed in the Voters Pamphlet, giving Oregon voters a "trustworthy, balanced, and investigative report on each ballot measure," according to HDO's website. Find out more on this process at www.healthydemocracyoregon.org — Chuck Adams

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs



THROWING PRO-BONE-O A BONE

A "Bone-A-Fit" for Pro-Bone-O, a local non-profit organization that provides free veterinary care for pets of people who are homeless, will be held at Bare Bones Dog Wash and Bone Appetit Bakery's two locations, 3365 E. Amazon and 1025 River Road, from 10 am to 7 pm Saturday, June 7.

"We have the ability to help people who are experiencing the hardest time in their lives to keep their companions and not have to watch them starve and die," says Maureen McLain, president of the board of directors of Pro-Bone-O. Some clients have been seeking Pro-Bone-O's services for the last 10 years and will wait patiently for three and a half hours to have their pets served. "We've had a couple with a tiny Chihuahua that they've had for forever," says McLain. "We trim its nails, give it new meds and help him to have a healthier life. We can keep him comfortable and happy."

While you pamper your own darling doggie at the Bone-A-Fit, *Spot Magazine* will be at both locations from 1 to 5 pm, searching for their next cover model. For every bath you give your precious pup, 50 percent of the proceeds will go to Pro-Bone-O. Customers can enjoy cake and their pets can chow on homemade gourmet treats while supporting an organization that over the last 10 years has treated more than 7,000 critters from snakes to bunnies to chickens.

"First and foremost we'd like to get money for spay and neuters and medical procedures, like a tumor on a foot," says McLain. "Second, we want to let people know that the service is there so people can get the word out, and we'd always like people to volunteer."

Pro-Bone-O's next clinic will be held the day after the Bone-A-Fit at Lindhome Center off Hwy. 99. For more information on Pro-Bone-O's services visit proboneo.org or call 607-8089.

Pro-Bone-O's dogs have loving owners, but if you'd like to give a homeless dog or cat a home, Eugene's Save the Pets (www.savethepets.net), Greenhill Humane Society (www.green-hill.org), LCAS (www.lanecounty.org/animals/impound) and other groups are working hard to find families for the pets of Lane County.

—Cali Bagby

MEETING OF THE MINDS

A diverse group of speakers on the topic of Alzheimer's disease, including those who are affected by the disease, is coming up. The Regional Conference of the Alzheimer's Association is scheduled from 8 am to 4:30 pm Saturday, June 7, at the Willamalane Adult Activity Center, 215 West C St. in Springfield.

The title of the conference is "A Meeting of the Minds: Part II. Living with Alzheimer's, Putting the Pieces Together." The event is designed for family members caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or dementia, persons concerned about family