

## TAKING THE PAPER TRAIL

Sen. Ron Wyden pushes for paper ballots in elections

Sen. Ron Wyden wants elections to go back to the future.

Wyden, along with other senators including Sen. Jeff Merkley, introduced legislation to the U.S. Senate that would require state and local governments to use paper ballots to ensure elections are free from foreign interference, like Russians.

Wyden was joined at a press conference in Eugene Thursday, Aug. 30, by local chapters of the NAACP and League of Women's Voters, to advocate the Protecting American Votes and Elections (PAVE) Act of 2018.

If passed, the bill would require the use of paper ballots and "risk-limiting" audits for all federal elections, which Wyden says would limit the chances of foreign influence in elections.

Now, Wyden isn't pushing for ballots like hanging chads — which caused election controversy in Florida during the 2000 election.

He and other senators want elections to have a paper ballot which, when an audit is necessary, leaves a verifiable paper trail.

Wyden said about 40 million Americans currently use "unreliable" voting machines. In addition, 22 states do not offer paper ballots to voters.

The problem with modern elections, Wyden said, is that voting machine companies think they're above the law and have found a way to secure their place in elections thanks to active lobbying.

During the press conference, Wyden targeted Election Systems & Software (ES&S), a company that he described as a leading provider of election services and products.

In March, the senator questioned ES&S on whether the



company's voting machines were installed with remote-access software. The company didn't provide an answer.

ES&S sent a letter in April 2018 to Wyden, saying their voting machines had remote access software installed. As a result, the machines could be vulnerable to hacking, which has the power to manipulate election results.

"That's as bad for American voters as taking our ballots and transferring them to the streets of Moscow," Wyden said.

However, in an email to *Eugene Weekly*, the company expanded on the answer, saying the remote access software was not installed on voting machines but on computers used for elections administrative purposes, as was common practice for computers in the early 2000s.

ES&S added that it ended the practice in 2007 and its customers do not have the remote access software installed in computers today.

During the press conference, Wyden also took a hard stance against Russians as well as "hostile foreign states" that he said are able to easily penetrate U.S. democracy.

"The Russians are essentially like the burglars, who stalk around the neighborhood," Wyden said. "Literally going from door to door, looking for opportunities, doors

left open, places where they can penetrate our democracy."

Twelve Russians have been charged with hacking the 2016 U.S. election.

Wyden, however, says he doesn't want his tone to be confused with stirring up a Cold War-like narrative with Russia.

"There's a difference between Russians trying to undermine democracy and exploit the fact that our country has a president who's willing to go along with it, and going out and starting a new nuclear arms race," he tells *Eugene Weekly*.

So far, Wyden has recruited support from senators Bernie Sanders and Kamala Harris, and he says he's going to work on getting more allies in Congress.

As for securing the funds to distribute paper ballots, he says that Congress appropriated \$380 million for election security. This money could provide every registered American voter with paper ballots.

"Everyone should get a ballot by mail," Wyden said in reference that the U.S. should have an Oregon-style election. "Now, I don't think we can get that in this Congress. What we can do is get a paper ballot for every American." ■

## SLANT

• *Fear* is an apt title for **Bob Woodward's new book about the Trump White House**, where staffers steal the president's paperwork to keep him from starting a world war and POTUS derides his own attorney general as "retarded." But the real fright this week is the Senate confirmation hearing for Brett Kavanaugh, Trump's latest pick to stack the Supreme Court with justices opposed to abortion rights. Is anyone else afraid?

• After enjoying the first two seasons of the Netflix

series *The Crown*, we came to a stunning realization: **What the United States craves these days is proper royalty.** In *The Crown*, Claire Foy as a young Queen Elizabeth II learns the difference between her job as head of state and the prime minister's job as head of government. The American remake of the show would have to be called *The Clown* — for the man who holds both offices.

• To prove that wonderful gifts come in all sizes and for all life, a man this week told an *EW* employee about **adopting elderly dogs and giving them the home life they deserve.** It's something he has done for years. He showed off his

elderly, and shiny, blue heeler, adopted at 1st Avenue Shelter in Eugene more than a year ago. Sadly, a tumor in the dog's underside burst over the Labor Day weekend, and the dog will have to be put down. The man said he will be sad, but he will adopt another elderly dog and give it the gift of a dignified life. Please consider adopting elderly dogs and cats — the frosted faces in our shelters need a soft landing.

• Thought experiment as Twitter and Facebook representatives went before Congress on Sept. 5: **What is the effect of Twitter on Donald Trump's presidency?** What would happen if, say, a

wealthy group of investors bought controlling shares in Twitter (NYSE: TWTR) and then took away Trump's ability to Tweet? Is social media so powerful that, without it, Trump's seemingly Teflon-like ability to deflect scandal would disappear too? Duly noted: *EW* is pro-First Amendment and the right to free speech.

• Take some **action on climate change this weekend.** Saturday, Sept. 8 is a global day of action on climate change and 350 Eugene invites you to join in solidarity with people from 83 countries. 350 Eugene is coming together with "a dozen ally organizations, and the climate-concerned

community at large" to "Rise for Climate, Jobs and Justice." There will be a rally, teach-ins, pledge of resistance, activities for kids, short march and a public demonstration from 1 to 3 pm at the Campbell Community Center, 155 High Street. [world.350.org/eugene](http://world.350.org/eugene).

• **This week in *EW*'s online news coverage:** A mural by Blek Le Rat accidentally painted over, Sen. Ron Wyden's favorite Subway sandwich and *EW*'s football coverage of the "Bowling Green Massacre."