

Motor Voter registered 272,202 new voters this year

Turnout rate exceeded expectations

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Through November of this year, 272,202 Oregonians were registered to vote through the state's new automatic registration program, state officials announced Monday.

Of those registered through the initiative, referred to as Motor Voter, about 226,904 were registered in time to vote in November's election and more than 97,000 of them cast a ballot.

The Secretary of State's Office said in a statement that such a turnout rate — about 44 percent — among those automatically registered exceeded the expectations of elections experts.

With approximately 20 days left in her tenure, Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins was at the Capitol Monday during the Legislature's final interim session of the year to tout the results of Motor Voter.

At a press conference in Gov. Kate Brown's office, Atkins stood



Claire Withycombe/EO Media Group

Gov. Kate Brown and Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins used bags of hazelnuts Monday to represent the number of new voters registered under the Motor Voter law. According to the Secretary of State's Office, 272,202 new voters were registered under the law for the November election.

behind large bags of hazelnuts, which were intended to reflect the number of new Motor Voters.

"Like hazelnuts, this program is uniquely Oregon," Atkins said. "Unlike hazelnuts, automatic voter

registration can grow and expand anywhere in America."

Oregon is the first state to implement such a program. Oregonians who have contact with the Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Divi-

sion and are legally eligible to vote are now automatically registered. They can choose a party affiliation, or remain nonaffiliated. Oregonians can opt out of registration altogether.

In testimony before the Senate Rules Committee Monday, Atkins said before Motor Voter, relatively fewer eligible Oregonians were registering to vote, and therefore fewer eligible Oregonians were participating in elections.

Atkins also expressed confidence in the state's election process in a year when, she noted, the process itself has been under heightened scrutiny.

Two cases of allegedly fraudulent registration have been referred to the state Department of Justice, and one instance was related to Motor Voter, Atkins said during Monday's meeting.

Secretary of State-elect Dennis Richardson does not plan to make significant changes to the program, a spokesman said Monday.

However, Richardson, a former state legislator from Central Point, expressed concerns about ensuring adequate funding for the program.

In a statement, Richardson, the first Republican to be elected secretary of state in decades, said that while access to voting is "crucial to

serving the public good," he wanted to make sure there was enough money for it.

"We must now work to ensure adequate funding supports the 36 counties across our state so local elections clerks can be fully successful on (sic) this important work," his statement said.

The program has meant additional costs for county offices.

Motor Voter's additional registrants meant more costs for postage and temporary employees in Umatilla County, according to Umatilla County Clerk Kim Lindell.

Between 2015 and 2016, the number of registered voters in Umatilla County leapt nearly 22 percent, according to data the Secretary of State's Office compiled for its Wednesday presentation to the Legislature's Emergency Board.

The Secretary of State's Office has calculated \$5,727 in reimbursements to Umatilla County — 15 cents for every active registered voter in 2016. Lindell said the approximate cost of the election to the county was \$47,168, a \$7,549 increase from the 2014 general election.

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Larson: Funeral service will take place Friday in Seaside

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"He was more than willing to reach out to anybody, whether they agreed with him or not," Winstanley said. "He talked to people, included people — he was a marvelous mayor. The city of Seaside couldn't have been luckier to have him and it's certainly a great loss."

Among his accomplishments as mayor, Larson pointed to a skate park, a new library and the North Holladay Drive renovation, the boat ramp at Broadway Park and upgrades to city buildings. During his time as mayor, the city built four bridges to tsunami standards and the Recycling Center on Avenue S.

Larson was married to the former Lois Kolden since March 1961.

Flags in Seaside will be low-

ered to half-staff in honor of Mayor Larson.

He is also survived by sons David, Duane and daughter Lorraine and seven grandchildren, all of whom live in the Portland area.

"Although we knew this was coming with Mayor Larson, it still hits you with a jolt," City Councilor Tita Montero said. "There's a measure of sadness at this Christmastime. We will miss him in this city. He was a wonderful ambassador for Seaside."

"He always cared so much about the city of Seaside," Winstanley said. "We were certainly honored to have served with him."

A funeral service will take place at 11:30 a.m. Friday at North Coast Family Fellowship, 2245 N. Wahanna in Seaside.



Mayor Don Larson at a visioning session in 2013.

The Daily Astorian File Photo

Barber: New mayor and his wife have lived in Seaside since 2006

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That nomination was seconded and unanimously endorsed by councilors.

Barber then took the oath of office, administered by City Manager Mark Winstanley.

"I'm humbled to sit in this chair," Barber said. "Don Larson served in this chair for 14 years. He not only served in this chair, but he served in this community in a way I don't think anybody in the city of Seaside has been able to do. I'm honored to have the opportunity to serve the community and with this great council."

California mayor

Barber, a retired college president, foundation director and ordained minister, served as a councilor and two-term mayor in Red Bluff, California, a position which, he said, gave him experience dealing with the public.

He and his wife Jan have

lived full time in Seaside since 2006.

Barber was selected in 2009 to fill the unexpired council term of the late Gary Diebolt. Barber won election for Ward 1 in 2010 and again in 2014.

"I think we will be very well served with Jay," City Councilor Tita Montero said, a sentiment echoed by councilors Randy Frank, Seth Morrissey and Dana Phillips.

Among his first order of business, Barber presided over the third and final reading of an ordinance raising Seaside's lodging tax. The increase hikes

the rate from 8 percent to 10 percent and will be used to fund renovations at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

Johnson, who served his last meeting after his loss to Tom Horning in the November election, was honored by councilors for 18 years of service with a plaque and remembrance.

"Thank you for your exceptional knowledge and willingness to give so much time in making Seaside a better place now and in the future," Barber said in presenting the plaque to Johnson.

Water: Customers are urged to share info with others who drink city water

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The violation was tied to the construction of the Spur 14 water source from a creek that produces the cleanest water in the Bear Creek watershed, the city's water supply.

The project was supposed to be completed in October, according to the Public Works Department, but has been pushed back to December.

The city has been using the Main Lake water source during the project, because the Middle Lake source had to be taken offline. Middle Lake typically has the best water in the fall and

early winter.

The city used a higher than normal amount of chlorine this fall to treat organic matter in the Main Lake water. The interaction between the chlorine and the organic matter produces what are known as disinfection byproducts, which are contaminants.

In November, the city notified the maximum contaminant level for the quarter, readings that pushed an annual average in one category — haloacetic acids 5 — above the threshold for the year. The standard for HAA5 is 0.060 milligrams to liter, and the city was

at 0.062 milligrams to liter.

The city is now using Middle Lake water, so public works officials believe disinfection byproduct levels will drop back to acceptable concentrations.

According to a draft of the notification letter, people who drink water in excess of the maximum contaminant level for many years may have an increased risk of cancer.

Customers are urged to share the information with others who drink city water but may not receive the notification letter, such as people in apartments, nursing homes, schools and businesses.



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