

# What makes people vote?

by Margot E. Beutler

Voter registration campaigns seem to be a common tactic of organizations seeking political power. The Jackson campaign is doing it. The NAACP has been registering voters for years. Hispanics in the Southwest have begun to influence electoral outcomes through newly registered voters.

In Oregon, the A. Phillip Randolph Institute is registering Black trade unionists, and the Human SERVE campaign is registering social service recipients. Peace, environmental and other issue groups are doing the same.

Lots of activity is going on, but the question remains: Will they vote? An understanding of what motivates people to vote will give some substance to speculations on whether or not minorities will register and vote in 1984.

People, apparently, decide to vote on the same basis as they make other decisions—"What's in it for me?" If the advantages of voting are perceived to outweigh the trouble (the cost) of voting, people will vote. A perception of little change occurring or little benefit accruing to the voter, however, will seriously discourage voting.

The impact of one's vote on the immediate outcome of an election is generally of less consequence than the effect of voting itself on the immediate well-being of the individual. Ward bosses no longer condition political favors on proof of voting, but social or family pressure can motivate voting as part of one's civic duty or allegiance to the system or a party. Groups or organizations seeking political influence often motivate their followers to maximize power through membership in a voting bloc.

Whatever the source, motivation to vote often is based on the perception of intangible benefits to accrue to the voter. Lack of voter participation, on the other hand, can be blamed on a lack of perceived benefits.

Motivation to vote is thus one important component of the likelihood of voter participation. The other factor is the cost of voting.

While poll taxes are no longer used to discourage registration and voting, other barriers still exist. One has to make time to register to vote; to learn about the candidates, issues and political parties; to decide how to vote; and to get to the polls on election day.

Voter registration is one common barrier to voting. Forms must be located, filled out, and returned to the proper agency. The more experienced a person is in bureaucratic procedures—i.e., meeting deadlines and requirements—the more likely they will be to register and vote.

To the extent these barriers are lessened, voter behavior increases. One social service agency in Portland

found that clients seldom picked up a voter registration form from a very prominently arranged display, but responded heavily to a volunteer urging them to register to vote. Apparently, people are willing to register when the initiative comes from someone else.

Remembering to vote is another example. Every political campaign knows special efforts are needed to turn out known supporters of the candidate or issue. Project Vote!, a non-partisan, low-income voter registration coalition, experimented with different voter turnout activities in New Jersey and came up with the following results:

Type of Voting Reminder	Voter Turnout
One reminder letter	29%
One telephone call	59%
One letter, two calls	66%

Voting seems to be like so many other things in life. First we have to recognize a value to ourselves in doing it. Then we have to get around to doing something about it.

To the extent voting behavior is facilitated by organized groups interested in either the process or the outcome, voter turnout will be increased. But for voters to remain active after the voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts have faded, one must believe that voting will beneficially affect one's life.

How many times do we hear the comment that voting doesn't matter because: a) politicians are all the same; b) they don't care; or c) they are all in the pocket of someone else. These frequent complaints have one common origin—the belief that no personal benefit will accrue from an election.

This outsider's view of the American political process may be changing, if recent minority voting patterns are any indication. Black voter turnout on a national scale has surged since 1978, and voter registration has followed suit. Between 1980 and 1982, 573,000 new Black voters were added to the rolls, and since the summer of 1982, 600,000 more signed up. Black voters now comprise 59 percent of those eligible to be voters, or 10.4 million Black voters out of a pool of 17.6 million of voting age.

This increased participation may partly be due to an increase of Black candidates. The mayors of three of the four largest cities in the United States are Black, (Harold Washington in Chicago, Tom Bradley in Los Angeles, and Wilson Goode in Philadelphia), 240 other Black mayors have been elected, 350 Blacks are state legislators, and 3,400 other Black officials now hold office.

Worsening economic conditions for Black Americans have engendered a different response in the 1980s than occurred in the 1960s. Instead of expressing hostility through marching or violence,

minorities of all races are rediscovering the power of the ballot box. The controversial presidential campaign of the Rev. Jesse Jackson serves the entire minority community as a symbol of discontent with the manner in which economic and social benefits have been distributed by and because of the policies of the Reagan administration.

Jackson, in fact, says his purpose in seeking the Presidency is to change the nature of national politics so it "will include the disaffected, those who have been denied inclusion in the process—Blacks, women, Hispanics, Native Americans...."

We may be witnessing a beneficial cause-and-effect mechanism in minority political behavior. The perceived inequitable distribution of social benefits has spurred minority

candidates to seek office; and the availability of those candidates has spurred voting among those previously alienated from the political system.

If the policies of the Reagan Administration are thoroughly debated during the coming campaign, the likely outcome will be increase voter participation by Blacks and other minority group members. To the extent people see a chance to alter their lot through the ballot box, voting will occur.

The problem for the Democrats will be to maintain that belief in social change if Jackson is not on the ticket in the fall.

Margot E. Beutler is the campaign director of the Oregon Human SERVE Voter Registration Campaign.

**Variety I Salon**  
SPECIALIZING IN TOTAL HAIR CARE  
announces  
its reopening of  
**VARIETY II  
SALON**  
February 7, 1984



Technicians	Locations
Sonia .....	4554 NE Union
Valerie .....	284-8017
Melvia, Manager .....	3512 NE 15th Ave.
Gloria & Camille .....	287-5618

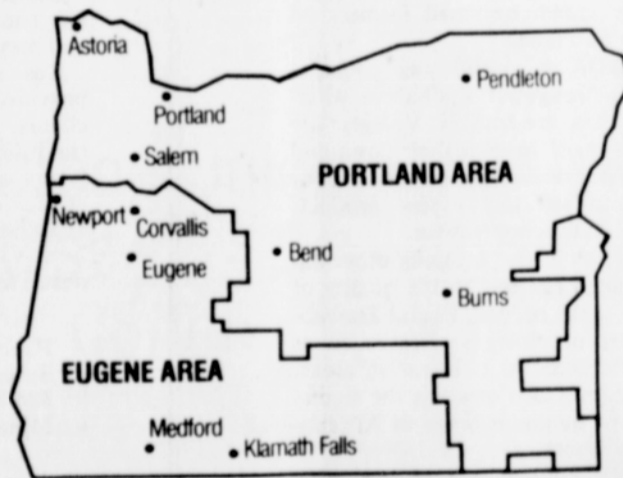
WALK-IN WELCOME • APPOINTMENTS DESIRED

# Important Information for Long-Distance Customers in Oregon

Your first bill for 1984 telephone services includes some changes. For the first time, charges for AT&T Communications long-distance calls will be included in your bill.

## Service Areas

As a result of the break-up of the Bell System, two service areas have been created within Oregon. The local telephone companies are restricted to providing service within these areas and AT&T Communications provides service between them (see map).



## AT&T Long-Distance Prices

Prices for AT&T Communications long-distance calls within Oregon are the same as those in effect in the state prior to January 1, 1984, with the exception of a three-cents-per-minute increase. These prices reflect payments to the local telephone company which partially cover the costs of the origination and termination of our customers' calls. These payments have increased the cost of providing long-distance services. Approximately two-thirds of the money we receive from customers this year will be paid to the local telephone companies.

The examples below illustrate some typical prices for three-minute daytime station-to-station calls of varying distances:

From	To	Price
Salem	Corvallis	\$ .56
Portland	Eugene	1.10
Eugene	Bend	1.10
Astoria	Newport	1.10
Portland	Medford	1.54
Pendleton	Klamath Falls	1.54

## AT&T Discounts

AT&T Communications offers the same discounts for evening, night, weekend and holiday calls as before the break-up of the Bell System:

- 25% from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Friday.
- 50% from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. daily.
- 35% from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

The evening price applies on major holidays except when a lower price is in effect.

## AT&T Provides Quality Service

Customer satisfaction is the fundamental goal of AT&T Communications. Our professionally trained staff and skilled long-distance operators will continue to serve you in the same helpful and courteous manner to which you have been accustomed. We will continue to seek solutions to provide you with the best service at the lowest possible prices.

AT&T Communications looks forward to continuing to be what you call long distance, anywhere, any time.

For further information, please call:  
Residence Customers:  
1-800-222-0300  
Business Customers:  
1-800-222-0400



**WHY WAIT**  
Safeguard Your Home  
Will install metal screen for basement window.  
Modest prices!  
234-2748

**Hock Shop**  
Buy, Sell or Trade Anything of value  
5600 N.E. Union  
287-5330

**DR. PHILIP MEGDAL DENTAL GROUP**  
**QUALITY AFFORDABLE DENTISTRY**  
PROFESSIONAL DENTAL SERVICE INCLUDES

- Fillings
- Children's Dentistry
- Crowns
- Preventive Dentistry
- Dentures
- Root Canals
- Bonding
- X-Rays
- Extractions
- Repairs & Retines

**SPECIAL OFFER \$19<sup>95</sup>**

**CHECK-UP X-RAYS • EXAM CLEANING • DIAGNOSIS**  
Limited Time Offer

**STATE AID WELCOME**  
**NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED**

**OFFICE HOURS: Mon-Fri. 9 a.m.-6 p.m.**  
**777-0761**  
3580 S.E. 82nd St., Portland  
1 block south of Powell Blvd.  
EMERGENCY ANSWERING SERVICE 777-0761