

Clinton-Obama Vote for Democrats Only

continued ▲ from Front

On the Republican side, Sen. John McCain has already locked up his party's nomination, and the Oregon vote will have little national importance for the GOP.

State Sen. Avel Gordly, an African-American lawmaker who represents northeast and southeast Portland, has changed her party affiliation to vote in the Obama-Clinton contest.

Having been an independent for the past couple of years, Gordly decided to reregister as a Democrat so she can participate in the voting.



Sen. Avel Gordly

She announced her decision last week at a rally in support of Obama at a podium with 25 other Obama-backing elected officials on Salem's Capitol steps.

Gordly also joined more than 10,000 Oregonians who have re-registered to vote in the past two months.

The enthusiasm over the election will continue to increase, predicts Vicki Paulk, a Multnomah County Elections manager who has returned from retirement to aid in the transition of a new department director from Virginia. The elections office has had to hire temporary staff to open stacks of voter registration cards and plans to continue expanding in the coming days.

"It feels like we really matter this year," Paulk says. "There's just an additional level of excitement even for those of us



PHOTO BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Voter registration cards get sorted by Paula Johnson, office assistant at Multnomah County Elections in southeast Portland.

who are putting on the election in knowing that there is going to be a high level of interest and hopefully also participation."

Gordly's path back into partisan politics began when she met Obama during his first visit to Portland as a presidential candidate last September. "As we were talking and as he found out I was an independent and longtime member of the Oregon Legislature, he said to me that he

was going to need my help and the help of other independents. I let him know then that he could count on my support," she says.

Democrats and Republicans in Salem last year opposed a plan of Gordly and some other "third-party" activists to give the state an open-primary elections law. She now hopes that Obama's vision of unity will help find ways to unseat parti-

san politics' tendency to diminish participation, especially from minority viewpoints.

"Although I have made this choice to re-register," she says, "I'm going to be looking very closely at the leadership of the Oregon Democratic Party and at others who hold power within the party."

Former members of the Democratic Party aren't the only ones making the switch.

A self-professed "conservative in every way," Sally Dick of southeast Portland says she re-registered from Republican to Democrat last week, saying, "I feel I have a vested interest in who's running, and I want to be part of that choice."

She expects to support McCain in November's general election but plans to vote for Obama in the Primary.

Paulk welcomes the increased activity around the election office and strives to make it as simple as possible to register to vote. Extra confusion among voters arose from President Bush's "Help America Vote Act of 2002" that requires a driver's license number or the last four digits of a Social Security number.

Ten to 20 percent of registration forms are sent back for more information, estimates Paula Johnson, who sorts all the elections mail for the county. She always tries to figure out incomplete addresses, but she legally cannot decide a voter's political party when the section is left blank or when more than one party is marked.

Current addresses are required. If you've moved, you must reregister to vote. Ballots cannot be forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service.

Voter registration cards can be filled out at the Multnomah County Elections office, 1040 S.E. Morrison St., or printed from Oregonvotes.org and mailed in. Ballots will be mailed to residences early in May.

Registration forms are also available at post offices, community centers and Sisters of the Road, 133 N.W. Sixth Ave., which offers its address so homeless people can participate in the election.

Rose Court Changes

continued ▲ from Front

Pacific Northwest, junior classes will add to the pool of princess candidates.

To stay in the program, the 14 participating high schools in Portland each must find at least five females that possess at least a 3.0 grade-point average or "significant mitigating circumstances," and that have performed a minimum number of hours of verifiable community service.

After helping to organize an estimated 2,849 volunteer hours last year, Clint acknowledges that the court of princesses represents the most complicated, strenuous and high-profile element of the 101-year-old June festival. Nevertheless, she argues that schools will elect to participate more actively.

"It would be surprising if the schools couldn't come up with five students from their junior and senior classes," she says. "In the unlikely event that we haven't received at least five qualified candi-

dates from any of the participating schools, we'll be in communication with them and say, 'Look, we know there are more girls out there.'"

As to why expansion of the program excludes Vancouver, Clatsop, Clackamas counties for the 15th at-large position. The suburbs have previously participated through private inner-city high schools St. Mary's and Central Catholic, which have designated spots on the court and don't draw enrollment based on residence.

The proposed changes shaking up the city include marking this year as the last time that high-school students choose representative princesses. Long recognizing the potential for a popularity contest, Rose Festival organizers are still looking into this change, according to Richard Jarvis of public relations.

Moreland-Capua thinks that the educational value of students' vote is underestimated in the proposal. "You take away some element of

ownership for being proud of the product of your environment," she says. "This is one thing that Portland Public Schools have always had in terms of a shining point, and it's been good enough for a century."

Hillary: 'I'm a Fighter'

continued ▲ from Front

troops from Iraq within two months. Though polls show Oregon tilting toward Obama, Hillsboro and other Portland suburbs could prove fertile territory for her, with a more moderate population than in the downtown urban core.

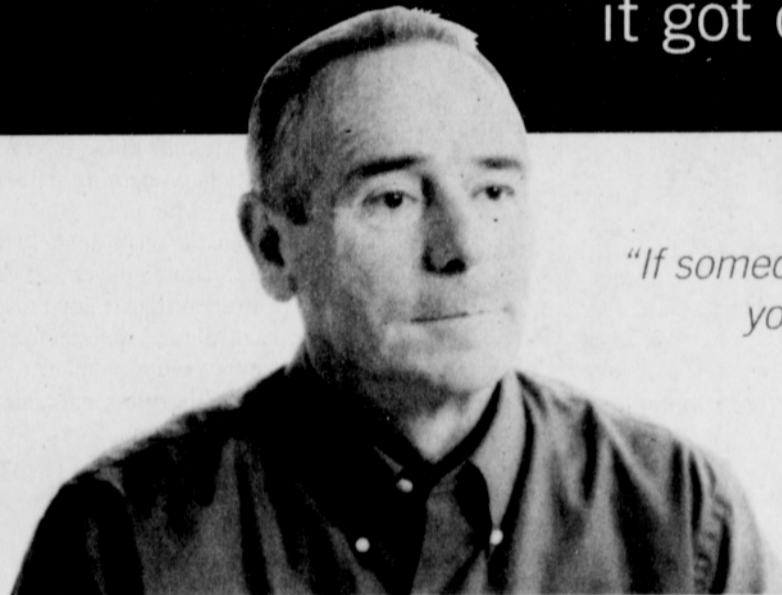
"I have never voted before. In junior high, I decided I wouldn't vote until a woman ran," said Hillsboro resident Olivia Leon, who owns a small business. "And here I am. I have waited 50 years for this."



Hillary Clinton

Leon said she remembered Bill Clinton's presidency with affection, and said she had admired Hillary Clinton's "patience" as First Lady, and her loyalty to her husband, even in hard times.

"Communication broke down... it got out of control."



"If someone's gambling is hurting you, make the call."

"It was so refreshing to be around people who were experiencing the same thing I was."



"There is help."

"It made me feel really good and positive."



Saturday Event to Register Voters

An invitation is extended for the public to convene to register to vote in Oregon May 20 Primary on Saturday, April 12, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Calvary Christian Center, 126 N.E. Alberta St.

Local community activists Rev. Renee Ward and Pastor Frederick Woods will host the second-annual Legislative Educational Day, a nonpartisan voter registration party to increase the number of registered voters and to increase the activism of residents concerning local issues impacting their community.

"We hope this event will

provide a venue to increase voter registration among ex-offenders, women, minorities, students and homeless citizens," Woods said.

Participating community partners include the Bus Project, North Northeast Business Association, Oregon Action, Urban League of Portland, Oregon Assembly of Black Affairs, Office of Neighborhood Involvement-Restorative Listening Project, Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, NAACP, KBMS 1480 AM Radio, The Portland Observer, Sen. Avel Gordly, and Rep. Chip Shields.

Oregon Black Political Convention

This year's Oregon Black Political Convention will be held at the Embassy Suites, 9000 S.W. Washington Square Road, Tigard, from Friday, April 18 to Sunday, April 20.

The event will mark the 16th time that the Oregon Assembly of Black

Affairs has promoted a conference targeting African-American issues during the spring of election years. Political candidates sensitive to the issues of the state's black population will also be endorsed over the weekend.

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