

Phoenix official backtracks after blaming voters for lines

PHOENIX (AP) — Bruce Weiss stewed after waiting 2½ hours in line outside a downtown Phoenix polling place, where juice drinks, snacks and circus animal cookies were handed out by citizens hoping to pacify thousands who turned out to cast ballots in Arizona's presidential primary.

The scene was repeated Tuesday as thousands stood in lines that wrapped around sidewalks at churches, community centers and government buildings after the number of places to vote were cut back as a cost-savings measure. Some voters took shelter from the sun under umbrellas. Others brought lawn chairs. Still others gave up and went home. The last voters entered polling spots after midnight.

"It's like a complete, total failure of government," Weiss said.

Waits dragged on as long as five hours in Maricopa County — home to metro Phoenix and 1.2 million voters eligible to cast ballots — but where only 60 polling places were open.

By Wednesday, the mayor of Phoenix said the cutbacks



David Kadlubowski/The Arizona Republic via AP
People wait in line to vote in the primary at the Environmental Education Center, Tuesday in Chandler, Ariz.

were about more than saving money. Mayor Greg Stanton, a Democrat, called for a federal investigation into whether election officials illegally put fewer polling locations in poor or minority-heavy areas.

Stanton in a letter to the Justice Department also cited examples of other policies adopted by elections officials and the state Legislature that have created "a culture of voter disenfranchisement."

Arizona's Republican governor called the primary day foul-ups "unacceptable," and others demanded the resignation of the county's top elections official, Recorder Helen Purcell.

Purcell initially put the

Ramped-up interest in the presidential primary was also seen Tuesday in Idaho and Utah, where results were delayed as throngs of voters packed caucus sites. Republican and Democratic party officials predicted record turnouts but still underestimated the crowds.

Three-fourths of the Democratic caucus sites in Utah ran out of ballots, sending workers to nearby stores to print more ballots or voters home to bring back reams of paper or even a home printer at one site.

Shrinking the number of voting spots in the Phoenix area was meant to save \$1.5 million, officials said. But other factors that contributed to the fiasco — which saw Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump breeze to victories in Arizona — were the growing number of mail-in ballots the county recorder has seen in the last decade.

When Phoenix news station Fox 10 asked Purcell who to blame for Tuesday's problems, she said, "Well, the voters for getting in line. Maybe us for not having enough polling places or as many as we usually have."

blame on voters, stirring a clamor on the Internet. Her name was a trending topic on Twitter. But Wednesday she backtracked, saying she failed to anticipate the effect of intense voter interest on primary turnout.

"I made bad decisions based on the information I had, obviously, or we wouldn't have had long lines," Purcell told The Associated Press.

In the 2012 presidential primary, there were 200 places for voters to cast ballots in the county, which is heavily Republican. By comparison, Pima County — home to more liberal Tucson, Arizona, and a quarter of Maricopa County's population — had 124 voting locations Tuesday.

TOBACCO: State doesn't have tobacco retail licenses

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and Umatilla. The subject is a relevant one, said Jones.

"Tobacco is still the leading preventable cause of death," she said.

According to a statewide survey by the Oregon Health Authority, about 12,700 people in Umatilla County smoke. Twenty-three percent of Umatilla County adults smoke compared with the statewide average of 19 percent. Almost 3,000 have serious illness caused by tobacco and each year 148 of them die a tobacco-related death. More than a quarter of 11th graders smoke or use non-cigarette tobacco.

The effort to tackle the issue locally rather than at the state level came after the demise of a bill to license tobacco retailers. Senate Bill 1559 would have combated sales to minors by licensing retailers with the Department of Revenue and revoking the license for repeat violations, much the same as with alcohol.

"Oregon is one of the few states that doesn't have tobacco retail licenses," Jones said. "In Oregon you

have to have a license to sell Christmas trees, but you don't need a license to sell tobacco."

The bill was set aside after it became something of a partisan bargaining chip, according to the bill's sponsor, Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, who accused Republicans of acting childishly and putting politics ahead of children.

Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena) said the Senate simply ran out of time to sand down some of the rough spots before the short session ended. An example of a rough spot was a section of the bill that would have prevented new stores from selling tobacco within 1,000 feet of schools. Current businesses would have been grandfathered in, but transfers to new owners, even those in the family, were not.

"In Athena, we have two establishments that would both fall within 1,000 feet," he said. "If they sold the businesses, the grandfathers would not go with them."

He expects a similar bill to show up in next year's full session.

"I'm sure it will be back and we'll have time to work through it," he said.

A couple of Oregon counties (Lane and Multnomah) and one city (Cottage Grove) aren't waiting. They acted to require licenses at the local level to sell tobacco or inhalant delivery systems such as e-cigarettes. Umatilla County is taking this first step to develop a strategy.

Jones said the Umatilla County effort will engage retailers, community partners and especially youth.

"Youth have a lot of power and they care about their generation," Jones said.

Toni Walters, who manages Dave's Chevron, explained that the "power wall" is the result of agreements with tobacco companies.

"Tobacco companies offer merchant contracts that bring down prices of cigarettes," Walters said. "In exchange, the power wall is put up the way they want it."

Shawn Abdullah, owner of Bare Bones in Pendleton, didn't reject the idea of working with the county's new coordinator, but he doesn't necessarily think

it's the correct approach. Many of the young smokers he knows have parents who smoked and provided a bad example. Boosting the smoking age to 21 as California is considering might push off the decision to smoke until they are more mature.

"I think it's the only way," he said. In any case, "we always ID anyone who looks 26 or younger."

He stood near the store's wall of cigarettes, cans of chewing tobacco, vaping supplies and tobacco posters. The store focuses on adult products such as tobacco and alcohol, though it also offers beverages and snacks.

Jone said tobacco advertising in stores affects not only adolescents, but former smokers and other adults who are trying to quit.

"We are really out to keep the next generation from being addicted to tobacco," she said. "We also want to help the 75 percent of tobacco users who are trying to quit."

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PRIMARY: Mailer lists three options for non-affiliated voters

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it was a top priority for Gov. Kate Brown, who advocated for it in her previous position as secretary of state.

Under the law known as "motor voter," the state automatically registers people who are eligible to vote after they obtain or renew their driver's licenses, permits or identification cards. The Secretary of State's Elections Division then sends notices to people identified as eligible, giving them 21 days to opt out of registration or to register with a political party. If people do nothing, the state registers them as unaffiliated voters.

The secretary of state's primary mailer lists three options for non-affiliated voters: do nothing and receive a ballot with only nonpartisan races; register with one of the three major parties online at www.oregonvotes.gov or at their county clerk's office; or return an enclosed postcard to request a primary ballot for the Independent Party of Oregon. The deadline to change party registrations or request an Independent Party of Oregon ballot is 5 p.m. April 26. The state sent out the first batch of mailers on March 15 and a second batch went out on Monday.

Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins said a couple of factors contributed to her decision to send the mailer.

Atkins wanted to notify non-affiliated voters of the opportunity to request an Independent Party of Oregon

ballot, even though she said the law does not require this notification. Atkins also saw an opportunity to educate voters about other options.

"I have a really great interest in ensuring voters know a lot about what their options are and rather than sending a mailing on behalf of one party, it seemed like a very natural expansion to say this is what is happening now," Atkins said Wednesday. Atkins said that with "these high profile races that are going on, I didn't want a lot of non-affiliated voters getting ballots and saying, 'Where do I vote for Bernie Sanders or Hillary Clinton?'"

Sal Peralta, secretary of the Independent Party of Oregon, had a mixed opinion of the primary mailer.

"I think the card itself presented good information for voters," Peralta said. "It was nice from a civics standpoint." However, Peralta suggested the Secretary of State's Office might have other reasons to send the mailer.

"The fact they used our

elections notice to encourage people to register with parties I think is an indicator they're worried party registration is plummeting as a result of that law," Peralta said, referring to the new motor voter law.

Atkins said she was following the precedent set a few years ago, when as secretary of state Brown decided to send mailers to all voters informing them of the option to request ballots so they could participate in the open Republican primary.

The executive director of the Democratic Party of Oregon declined to comment on whether the party was concerned about the increase in non-affiliated voters, and the Oregon Republican Party did not respond to the same question.

As of February, the influx of non-affiliated voters had a negligible effect on the split

of voters among the major parties, according to an analysis of voter registration data.

However, the state has estimated that automatic registration could eventually add as many as 400,000 new voters to the rolls, with much of the increase expected after the Secretary of State's Office uses DMV data to register people who obtained or renewed their driver's licenses, permits or identification cards over the last two years. The agency will not implement that plan until after the May primary. Oregon has 2.2 million registered voters.

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HERMISTON



EO file photo

Good Shepherd Health Care System's diagnostic imaging department was awarded a Gold Seal of Accreditation in magnetic resonance imaging by the American College of Radiology.

Good Shepherd earns gold seal for MRI program

East Oregonian

practices.

Good Shepherd Health Care System's diagnostic imaging department was awarded a Gold Seal of Accreditation in magnetic resonance imaging by the American College of Radiology.

The gold seal represents the "highest level of image quality and patient safety" for MRI tests, according to a news release from Good Shepherd.

To receive the seal the hospital went through a peer-reviewed evaluation by board-certified physicians and medical physicists. The evaluation examined image quality, personnel qualifications, facility equipment, quality control procedures and quality assurance programs. The accreditation also comes with a comprehensive report that the department can then use to continue improving its

Director of Diagnostic Imaging Robert Rose, Radiologic Technologist (RT), R, CT, MR, said in a news release from Good Shepherd that the designation is "quite the accomplishment and something our community should be proud of."

"This designation requires an in-depth review by the ACR of the quality and safety of the service we provide with MRI. In addition, each of our technicians and radiologists have to complete mandatory continuing education credits which give them the knowledge and ability to provide the best service possible for our community," he said.

The diagnostic imaging department also had a gold seal accreditation from the American College of Radiology for its computerized tomography (CT) scans and mammography.

HOMICIDE: Family has not heard from investigators

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also states Contreras claims there was a second shooter.

Primus did not speculate about that. He said he has "been in communication with the feds in this case and will continue working with them."

Tony Jimenez's sister, Marisol Jimenez, said the family has not heard from investigators, but they could be giving the family time to arrange her brother's funeral services. She said they anticipated hearing more as the case developed.

Primus said this homicide is different from the case of Thadd Nelson of Meacham, who was a non-Indian living on reser-

vation land when he was shot and killed Jan. 27.

Police the next day arrested Joseph Aaron McIver, 22, of Umatilla, Edward Duarte Ayala, 46, and Armando Rueben Vargas, 39, both of Hermiston, in connection to the homicide. Primus charged Ayala and Vargas with gun crimes and McIver with murder with a firearm. Days later he dismissed the cases after the Oregon U.S. Attorney's Office indicted the trio on one count each of felon in possession of a firearm.

Those cases are going forward in federal court, but Primus still can bring charges against the defendants.

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