

'Motor voter' law a success, with a hitch

By KRISTENA HANSEN
Associated Press

Oregon's landmark new automatic voter registration system added nearly 52,000 voters in just four months this year, more than double what the state has normally seen for an entire year.

That sounds impressive, but there's a hitch. The so-called "motor voter" law — a first in the nation widely hailed as a way to boost voter participation — hasn't made it much easier to participate in the closed primary on Tuesday.

Unlike the November general election when all voters can participate, the presidential primary in Oregon and some other states is restricted only to voters who are registered as Republican or Democrat.

Under the new law, Oregonians 18 and up are automatically registered to vote while renewing or applying for a driver's license or state ID card, but they can't pick a party at that time. Instead, they're registered by default as nonaffiliated, and a few days later they can choose a party or opt out on a form sent by mail.

Most people, however, don't return their forms.

As a result, three-quarters of the motor voter registrants are unable to vote for a presidential candidate Tuesday.

Oregon Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins, whose agency is handling the law's rollout, defended the new system.

"I certainly won't argue that closed primary elections

for brand new voters first time out is the way we're going to get the most participation out of them," she said. "The closed primary may not be the best example of when this will have a very big impact ... the real proof of the pudding will come in November."

California, Vermont and West Virginia recently adopted similar laws, while it's being considered in another two dozen or so other states.

That puts Oregon's implementation under a national microscope, said Jim Moore, a political science professor at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, west of Portland.

What's happened so far suggests the first wrinkle in fulfilling the law's promise of knocking down outdated barriers to voting, Moore said. It's also possible, he said, that some of the "motor voter" registrants are indifferent to politics, which was expected.

"They've in effect denied a choice to these newly registered, passively registered voters," he said. "It takes a bit just to actually get someone to register to vote, much less register for a party and then vote. And so it shows at this very lowest level, these passive registrants, they are less engaged than the rest of the electorate."

Aside from automatic registration, Oregon's presidential primary has seen unprecedented enthusiasm. A separate group of roughly 145,000 Oregonians switched to Democrat or

Republican or signed up with those parties when they registered to vote.

For those who registered through motor voter, only 13,000 took that same initiative.

California, which is rolling out its motor-voter program next year, will allow people the option of registering to vote and also affiliate with a party on driver's license applications at the motor vehicle department. Party affiliation won't be an issue in Vermont, where primaries are open to all registered voters.

Atkins said it's worth discussing whether Oregon should change its approach.

"We're talking about a data-collection change at the department of motor vehicles that isn't part of their mission — I won't speak for that agency," she said. "I'm sure legislators will ask about that and we'll be happy to have the conversation."

Jonathan Brater, counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice's Democracy program at New York University School of Law, said the Oregon data show how critical party affiliations will be for other states to consider.

"As the law is continuing to be implemented, this is something that will continue to be important to keep an eye on," Brater said. "But I'd also say that, looking at the big picture ... as these additions accumulate over time and over multiple elections cycles, the civic culture in Oregon overall is only going to get better."

BRIEFLY

Recall petition filed against top Harney County official

PORTLAND (AP) — A recall petition has been filed against a Harney County official who did not support the armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

Petitioners say they have gathered 566 signatures, more than enough to compel Judge Steve Grasty to resign or face a recall election.

Though his title is judge, Grasty's position is essentially chairman of the county commission. He tells *The Oregonian* he's not going to resign.

Ammon Bundy and others occupied the refuge this winter to protest the imprisonment of Dwight and Steven Hammond, two ranchers sent to prison for starting fires. They blame Grasty for not offering to protect the Hammonds from the federal government.

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office is working to verify the petition signatures.

State probes computer use by Yakima clerk's attorney

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — State investigators are looking into the access of Yakima County computers by County Clerk Janelle Riddle's private attorney.

According to the state Administrative Office of the Courts, Riddle allowed her attorney Joseph Thomas into the courthouse after normal business hours on March 19 despite county commissioners telling her not to, *The Yakima Herald-Republic* reported.

Commissioners have authority over access to the courthouse. Surveillance video from that day shows a deputy clerk logging onto a county computer and letting Thomas take over the keyboard. Such computers house public documents as well as confidential information about child custody cases, victims and other protected information.

County officials launched their own investigation into the matter due to concerns over what Thomas viewed. On Thursday the Administrative Office of the Courts agreed to Presiding Superior Court Judge David Eloffson's request to investigate the matter.

Riddle hired Thomas after county commissioners assembled a panel to look into concerns about how the clerk's office

is being run.

Thomas said he was only using the computer to get an understanding of clerk's office operations.

Lead found in the water at nearly every Bellevue school

SEATTLE (AP) — Drinking water tests in Bellevue schools have found unsafe levels of lead in the water from at least one fixture or fountain in almost every building in the wealthy suburban district where nearly every building is relatively new.

School officials are working on replacing or repairing the troubled fixtures which tested positive for lead above the actionable level set by the Environmental Protection Agency, the district told *The Associated Press* Friday.

Thirteen of the district's 16 elementary schools had at least one fixture that tested positive for lead above 15 parts per billion, according to district spokeswoman Christina Madden. All the district's middle schools and high schools had at least one drinking water fixture that tested above the EPA level.

District spokeswoman Elizabeth Sytman said none of the schools have shut down water fountains because the fixtures are being fixed as soon as the trouble is identified. Testing is ongoing, she said, and added that some tests that found lead happened before this month.

The AP asked every school district in the state if they test drinking water for lead. Of the more than half that responded to the request, about 60 percent said they test. Of those, nearly 20 percent have found lead in at least one fixture during the past decade or so. Most made immediate repairs.

Some districts said they do not test because all their buildings are relatively new and they didn't think the pipes or fixtures could lead into the drinking water. There is no state or federal law that requires schools to test the water inside their buildings for lead.

Bellevue has rebuilt most of its school buildings in the years since 2003.

Corrections

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY

A shower and t-storm around

SUNDAY

Cooler with spotty showers

MONDAY

Warmer with a shower or two

TUESDAY

Partly sunny and beautiful

WEDNESDAY

Partly sunny

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

67°	51°	60°	49°	70°	45°	76°	51°	80°	47°
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HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST

71°	53°	64°	50°	76°	48°	82°	52°	85°	51°
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ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	
HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 80°	47°
Normals 72°	46°
Records 96° (1931)	30° (1903)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.17"
Normal month to date 0.49"
Year to date 4.57"
Last year to date 4.19"
Normal year to date 5.64"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	
HIGH	LOW
Yesterday 80°	44°
Normals 72°	46°
Records 100° (1993)	33° (2004)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 0.59"
Normal month to date 0.49"
Year to date 3.57"
Last year to date 3.00"
Normal year to date 4.51"

REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Mostly cloudy today with a couple of showers. Plenty of clouds tonight with showers.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Cooler today with a couple of showers and a thunderstorm.

Western Washington: Mostly cloudy today. A couple of showers; arriving in the afternoon in central parts.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	60	50	sh	62	49	c
Baker City	72	43	t	56	42	c
Bend	63	40	t	59	42	sh
Brookings	57	49	sh	61	49	c
Burns	69	39	c	59	40	c
Enterprise	70	46	t	52	43	sh
Eugene	62	51	sh	62	48	sh
Heppner	66	48	t	59	46	sh
Hermiston	71	53	t	60	45	sh
John Day	71	45	t	57	46	sh
Klamath Falls	59	39	c	60	37	c
La Grande	71	49	t	56	46	sh
Meacham	68	46	t	54	44	sh
Medford	67	51	c	69	51	c
Newport	56	49	sh	56	49	c
North Bend	58	53	sh	61	50	c
Ontario	81	52	pc	68	48	c
Pasco	70	53	c	66	48	c
Pendleton	67	51	t	60	49	sh
Portland	63	53	sh	63	53	sh
Redmond	64	43	c	60	41	sh
Salem	61	51	sh	62	50	sh
Spokane	70	50	pc	62	48	c
Ukiah	64	44	t	52	43	sh
Vancouver	63	53	sh	62	52	sh
Walla Walla	64	51	c	59	50	sh
Yakima	75	53	c	68	48	c

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	56	52	sh	75	44	pc
Hong Kong	86	78	t	87	72	pc
Jerusalem	89	73	s	94	78	pc
London	57	40	pc	61	43	c
Mexico City	79	54	t	77	55	t
Moscow	63	44	s	60	45	pc
Paris	57	39	pc	56	43	sh
Rome	65	57	t	69	54	t
Seoul	78	57	pc	74	54	r
Sydney	76	55	s	77	58	s
Tokyo	75	57	pc	71	58	pc

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Sunday
Boardman	NNE 7-14	W 6-12
Pendleton	NNW 6-12	WSW 8-16

UV INDEX TODAY

1

8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

4

Noon - 2 p.m.

5

2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

5

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

3

6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

1

8-10, Very High;

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	60	50	sh	62	49	c
Baker City	72	43	t	56	42	c
Bend	63	40	t	59	42	sh
Brookings	57	49	sh	61	49	c
Burns	69	39	c	59	40	c
Enterprise	70	46	t	52	43	sh
Eugene	62	51	sh	62	48	sh
Heppner	66	48	t	59	46	sh
Hermiston	71	53	t	60	45	sh
John Day	71	45	t	57	46	sh
Klamath Falls	59	39	c	60	37	c
La Grande	71	49	t	56	46	sh
Meacham	68	46	t	54	44	sh
Medford	67	51	c	69	51	c
Newport	56	49	sh	56	49	c
North Bend	58	53	sh	61	50	c
Ontario	81	52	pc	68	48	c
Pasco	70	53	c	66	48	c
Pendleton	67	51	t	60	49	sh
Portland	63	53	sh	63	53	sh
Redmond	64	43	c	60	41	sh
Salem	61	51	sh	62	50	sh
Spokane	70	50	pc	62	48	c
Ukiah	64	44	t	52	43	sh
Vancouver	63	53	sh	62	52	sh
Walla Walla	64	51	c	59	50	sh
Yakima	75	53	c	68	48	c

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: Gusty storms will develop and push eastward in the Northeast today. Rain and snow showers will affect the Upper Midwest with downpours and storms in the southern Plains. Rain will cool the Northwest.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 104° in Gila Bend, Ariz. **Low 20°** in Angel Fire, N.M.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sun.				Today			Sun.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W		Hi	Lo	W			