

'Motor Voter' raised turnout, lowered percentage

More voters are registered, but many did not vote

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregonians voted in Tuesday's election at a slightly lower rate than usual for a presidential election, which may be attributable to the state's new automatic voter registration law.

About 76.2 percent of the state's 2.56 million registered voters cast ballots, according to unofficial ballot returns compiled by the Oregon Secretary of State and published Wednesday morning.

In the 2012 election, about 82.8 percent of registered voters returned ballots, according to the Secretary of State's Office; in 2008, turnout among registered voters was 85.67 percent, and in 2004, 86.48 percent.

Since the last presidential election, the state implemented a landmark law automatically registering new drivers to vote.

As of late October, about 230,000 people were registered to vote through the 2015 law, referred to as "Motor Voter."

Jim Moore, a professor of political science at Pacific University, said the law probably had the "expected" effect — dilution.

"...the Motor Voter act brought in new people who didn't vote," Moore said. "That's totally to be expected."

Although the number of registered voters leapt the highest numerically it ever has in a two-year period, that jump



A voter drops off a ballot at the Umatilla County Courthouse in Pendleton on Tuesday.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

is merely the fourth-highest percentage increase in registered voters in Oregon history, Moore said. The state saw a higher percentage increase when the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, for example, Moore said.

About 1.95 million ballots were returned this year.

Moore noted that Democratic Gov. Kate Brown likely benefited from the unusual timing of this year's gubernatorial race.

That contest is usually held in the even years between presidential elections. But because Brown succeeded to the governorship when John Kitzhaber resigned early in his term, she was required to run this year to fill out the remainder of his four-year term.

More people tend to participate

in presidential elections, and when there's higher turnout in Oregon more Democrats usually vote, Moore said.

Participation rates appeared highest among registered Republicans and Democrats in this election, according to the Secretary of State's Office.

About 85.1 percent of the 715,845 registered Republicans returned a ballot, while 84 percent of the 985,696 registered Democrats returned a ballot.

Meanwhile, about 74.8 percent of the 119,268 registered Independents returned ballots and about 56.6 percent of the 675,809 nonaffiliated voters did so.

Under Oregon's law, unless a person chooses to register with a particular party or opts out of registration, Motor Voters are registered as nonaffiliated.

Oregon GMO mediation needs legislative fix

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

SALEM — A legislative mix-up has blocked the Oregon Department of Agriculture's implementation of a mediation program for growers of conventional, organic and biotech crops.

A lack of interest in the program, however, raises questions about its necessity.

In 2015, Oregon lawmakers passed House Bill 2509, which created mediation protocols for growers who believe nearby farming practices are interfering with their operations.

While the wording of the legislation is broad, it was considered a compromise bill to soothe conflicts among producers of genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, and their neighbors.

Another proposal to create "control areas" where GMOs would be subject to restrictions died in committee that year.

When the ODA began the rulemaking process for the mediation program, the agency discovered it lacked the authority to legally implement it.

Another bill passed in 2015, House Bill 2444, clarified language related to mediation by the agency and removed key provisions that ODA relied upon for the GMO mediation program.

"Through the hustle and bustle of the legislative session, it wasn't cross-checked with the other mediation bill," said Kathryn Walker, special assistant to ODA's director.

The problem will require a legislative fix during the 2017 session, she said. "There is interest in correcting the situation."

Since the law was passed, though, the agency has received no requests for mediation under the program, Walker said.

Growers can seek similar mediation through the USDA, but none have expressed interest with that agency,

either. Problems of cross-pollination among GMOs and other crops aren't prevalent, said Barry Bushue, president of the Oregon Farm Bureau.

"My guess is there's probably not a lot of need for it," Bushue said of the GMO mediation program.

Bushue pointed to a USDA survey that found only 92 organic farms across the U.S. experienced crop losses from GMOs between 2011 and 2014, while the nation has more than 14,000 organic farms.

"It's incredibly small," he said.

Oregonians for Food and Shelter, an agribusiness group, wants to know what kind of problems exist, but the lack of conflicts reported to ODA or USDA indicate they're likely minimal, said Scott Dahlman, the group's policy director.

"It speaks volumes to the fact that farmers know how to work together and find ways to figure it out themselves," he said.

Regulators tell Portland to reduce lead levels

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Health Authority has ordered Portland to reduce lead levels in drinking water on the heels of new testing that found too much lead at some taps.

In a Nov. 4 letter to the Portland Water Bureau, Oregon public health director Lillian Shirley said the city must submit a plan for lead reduction by Dec. 2, and identify immediate steps it will take to fix the problem.

To permanently solve the issue, Portland must upgrade its water treatment facilities and infrastructure, Shirley said. She gave the city six years to get it done.

City officials contacted by *The Oregonian/OregonLive* on Wednesday declined to say what steps they might suggest Dec. 2. Past studies have shown

that Portland could increase pH levels and alkalinity, which would likely reduce the pipe corrosion that causes lead release, particularly in homes with lead-soldered plumbing or brass faucets.

As for the long-term plan, Scott Bradway, Portland's lead hazard reduction manager, said the City Council will be asked to approve a new water treatment plant.

"Right now, our indications are this is probably the best path," he told the newspaper.

Portland's lead levels are higher than others nationally because regulators in the 1990s allowed the city to sidestep rules meant to minimize lead and pipe corrosion. Officials at the time considered exposure to lead paint a bigger problem, and were allowed to focus on that issue.

BRIEFLY

Palmer wins bid for re-election

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer won a close race for reelection Tuesday evening.

Final unofficial results released by Grant County Clerk Brenda Percy showed Palmer earned 2,208 votes, while challenger Todd McKinley earned 2,065.

Palmer has held the office since 2000. He faced scrutiny from some for meeting in John Day with some of the people who occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Burns earlier this year. Although some pleaded guilty to conspiring to impede federal employees, the leaders of the occupation, Ammon and Ryan Bundy, and five others were recently found not guilty of the crime by a jury.

Palmer is still the subject of an ongoing state Department of Justice investigation into complaints filed after he met with the occupiers.

— *Blue Mountain Eagle*

Second standoff defendant wants to withdraw plea

PORTLAND (AP) — A second defendant in the Oregon ranching standoff case has asked to withdraw his guilty plea.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that Eric Lee Flores says "newly discovered evidence" presented at the recent trial of seven people who took over a federal wildlife refuge in a 41-day armed standoff with authorities is grounds for the plea withdrawal.

Flores' lawyer, Ernest Warren Jr., says testimony from FBI informants revealed that they were encouraging others to violate the law and escalate confrontations with officers. Prosecutors said during the trial that 15 FBI informants were involved in the investigation of the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, including nine who were at the refuge during the takeover.

Flores was scheduled to be sentenced on Dec. 8.

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	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Fog in the morning; mostly sunny	Cloudy most of the time	A morning shower; partly sunny	Mostly cloudy	Partly sunny with a shower
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
58°	41°	59°	45°	60°
41°	59°	45°	60°	42°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
59°	40°	60°	45°	63°
40°	60°	45°	63°	39°
57°	45°	57°	45°	59°
45°	57°	45°	59°	42°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

HIGH LOW

Yesterday 65° 41°

Normals 52° 34°

Records 72° (1989) 19° (1986)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"

Month to date 0.19"

Normal month to date 0.36"

Year to date 10.58"

Last year to date 6.94"

Normal year to date 10.39"

HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE

HIGH LOW

Yesterday 67° 38°

Normals 54° 34°

Records 71° (1995) 13° (1936)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"

Month to date 0.09"

Normal month to date 0.33"

Year to date 7.42"

Last year to date 4.74"

Normal year to date 7.64"

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today 6:48 a.m.

Sunset tonight 4:30 p.m.

Moonrise today 2:38 p.m.

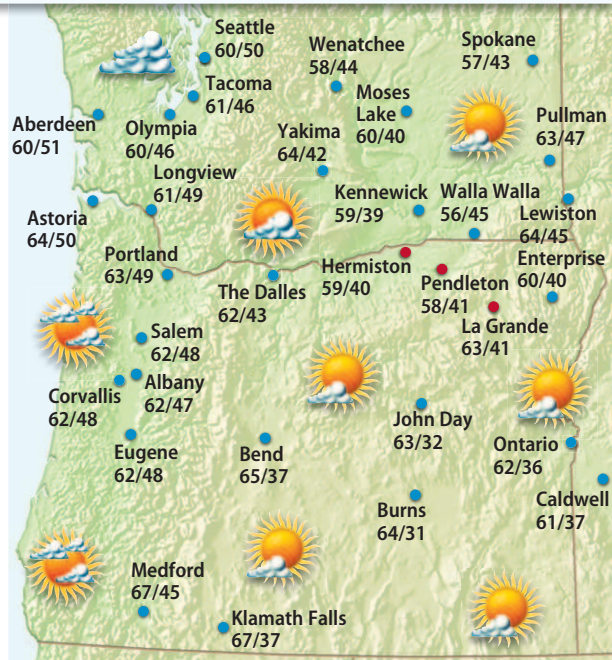
Moonset today 1:41 a.m.

Full Nov 14

Last Nov 21

New Nov 29

First Dec 7



REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Times of clouds and sun today. Cloudy tonight; however, partly cloudy in the south.

Eastern and Central Oregon: Mostly sunny today; areas of fog across the north during the morning.

Western Washington: Clouds and sun today; areas of morning fog. A little rain at the coast tonight.

Eastern Washington: Sunshine today; however, some clouds toward the Cascades; fog across the south, near the Idaho border and in the mountains.

Cascades: Partly sunny and warm today; pleasant in central parts.

Northern California: Partly sunny today. Partly cloudy tonight. Showers tomorrow afternoon at the coast.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	64	50	c	64	54	r
Baker City	62	33	s	62	45	pc
Bend	65	37	s	64	41	c
Brookings	63	52	pc	62	52	sh
Burns	64	31	s	64	38	pc
Enterprise	60	40	s	63	49	pc
Eugene	62	48	pc	64	50	r
Heppner	56	40	s	58	44	c
Hermiston	59	40	s	60	45	c
John Day	63	32	s	63	39	c
Klamath Falls	67	37	s	62	41	pc
La Grande	63	41	s	65	49	pc
Meacham	62	40	s	62	44	pc
Medford	67	45	pc	67	47	c
Newport	62	51	pc	64	53	r
North Bend	64	50	pc	67	54	r
Ontario	62	36	s	62	41	s
Pasco	60	39	s	57	46	c
Pendleton	58	41	s	59	45	c
Portland	63	49	pc	62	52	r
Redmond	67	40	s	66	41	c
Salem	62	48	pc	62	50	r
Spokane	57	43	s	58	46	pc
Ukiah	61	39	s	62	44	c
Vancouver	64	48	pc	63	51	r
Walla Walla	56	45	s	59	48	c
Yakima	64	42	pc	60	44	c

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	51	28	pc	51	32	s
Hong Kong	68	64	r	76	73	pc
Jerusalem	76	59	pc	72	56	pc
London	51	37	sh	47	42	pc
Mexico City	66	55	pc	67	55	t
Moscow	39	35	sn	38	22	sn
Paris</						