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OTHER VIEWS

Oregon’s easy voting makes elections better

Unlike much of the U.S., last month’s mid-term election was ho-hum in Oregon — as in, few election snafus.

The state Elections Division certified Oregon’s results last week, while races in some states remained undecided amid recounts, court challenges and allegations of fraud. From California to North Carolina, questions have been raised about the security of absentee voting by mail.

In Oregon, 1,914,923 voters cast ballots — a record for a mid-term election. Voting violations are rare, although a union-backed group, Our Oregon, did deliver 97 ballots to the Multnomah County elections office a day after the election deadline. The state Elections Division is investigating.

The ballots were collected from voters but not turned in by Defend Oregon, a political action committee affiliated with Our Oregon. Groups collect ballots to ensure they are cast, but the practice — called ballot harvesting — has raised concerns in some states for fear that partisan groups might have discarded ballots, because of the voters’ demographics,

or altered unsealed ballots.

Such concerns provide one more reason why Oregon should make its ballots postage-paid so more voters mail them in, as Gov. Kate Brown proposed in her 2019-21 state budget recommendation.

The reality is that the term “vote-by-mail” is inaccurate. Ballots are delivered to voters by mail but not necessarily returned that way. A 2016 survey found the majority of voters in Oregon, California and Washington took their ballots to a county elections office or official drop-site.

Oregon led the nation in launching all-mail voting, and this year gained the distinction of being the No. 1 state for ease of voting. Political scientists from Northern Illinois University, Jacksonville University and China’s Wuhan University created a “Cost of Voting Index” to analyze each state’s election laws.

Following Oregon at No. 1 were Colorado, California, North Dakota and Iowa. At the bottom: Mississippi, Virginia, Tennessee, Indiana and Texas.

Oregon combines vote-by-mail with automatic voter registration when an Oregon resident and U.S. citizen



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Election specialist Debbie Swenson verifies the ballot count for a voting precinct on May 9, 2018 at the Umatilla County Elections Division office in Pendleton.

visits the DMV to apply for, renew or replace a state driver license, permit or identification card. Brown wants to expand that automatic registration to include citizen interactions at other state agencies.

By the way, 16- and 17-year-olds can register but not vote until age 18.

However, Oregon lags in other ways. A third of U.S. states allow voter registration up through Election Day. North Dakota doesn’t even require registration. Yet Oregon cuts off registration 20 days before an election, having ended same-day registration in the 1980s because followers of

the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh recruited homeless individuals around the U.S. to come to Wasco County and vote for the sect’s local candidates.

Vote-by-mail in Oregon has been studied extensively. There is little evidence of fraud, although 48 individuals were suspected of voting twice in the 2016 presidential election, and six ballots were submitted from dead persons.

Such allegations are unsettling in a state that prides itself on clean elections. Yet they are tiny compared with the complaints of election fraud and vote suppression roiling other states.

It’s not just cell phones that distract drivers...



YOUR VIEWS

This land is God’s land

There is an historically organized and well coordinated political agenda in America and the world to end all national sovereignty and national borders in order to establish a global world government. To fund this new world government, a carbon tax on all fossil fuels has already been installed in many socialist nations. France is in flames today because the French people have not been deceived by the climate change hoax. America elected Trump for the same reason. The Democrat socialist-controlled state of Oregon is about to implement the same carbon tax that brought France to riots.

As long as America honors our constitutional liberty and freedom, the global socialist agenda and carbon tax will never take over America. Our Constitution is under a relentless assault by the global socialist-controlled press, media, Hollywood, Democratic party and Republicans in name only. They despise our President, our Constitution, our flag, our historical Christian heritage, and our liberty.

These globalists, posing as Americans, want our borders opened and our history and Constitution rewritten by defiling our forefathers as racists. In fact, anyone that does not accept their socialist, global, asexual, anti-Christian dogma is a racist. According to CNN’s Don Lemon, “The

biggest terror threat in this country is white men, most of them radicalized to the right, and we have to start doing something about them.” CNN panelist Kirsten Powers concurs, saying being a white women that voted for Donald Trump “actually makes you a racist.”

According to our global socialist-controlled colleges and universities, our founding Pilgrim fathers were racist intruders and our Declaration of Independence forefathers were racist slave owners or co-conspirators. This is what happens when anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-constitutional, pro-global forces take over our schools, our universities, our press, our media, and much of our government. Half of our millennial and Gen Z generation believe America is a racist and sexist nation and Obama was a greater president than George Washington.

Our forefathers, from the Pilgrims to the present, paid a horrific price in their blood, in their sacrifice and in their suffering to give America our liberty, our freedom, our flag and our Constitution. We are all immigrants, including the first Indian nations. No nation or people created America. God created this land and blessed all Americans. Like the French citizens, we will never compromise what our forefathers died to bestow.

Stuart Dick Irrigon

OTHER VIEWS

I like Joe Biden. I urge him not to run.

You’d agree, wouldn’t you, that Consideration No. 1 in choosing a Democratic nominee in 2020 is making sure that he or she is the person best positioned to defeat Donald Trump? That nothing else comes close?

Then what would you say if I told you that we should put our chips on a man who failed miserably at two previous campaigns for the nomination, the first one all the way back in 1988, a year before Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was born? And that when he applied the lessons from that debacle to his second bid two decades later, he did no better, placing fifth in the Iowa caucuses, getting fewer than 1 percent of the state’s delegates and folding his tent before even the New Hampshire primary?

And that he spent nearly 45 years in Washington, a proper noun that’s a dirty word in presidential politics? And that his record includes laws and episodes that are reviled — rightly — by the female and black voters so integral to the Democratic Party? And that, on Election Day, he would be 77, which is 31 years older than Bill Clinton was in 1992, 30 years older than Barack Obama was in 2008 and a complete contradiction of the party’s success over the last half-century with relatively youthful candidates?

You’d tell me that I was of unsound mind.

Well, Joe Biden’s boosters are.

Right now there’s a swell of talk about, and interest in, a Biden candidacy. Last Monday he told an audience in Montana that none of the other Democrats eyeing the White House were as qualified as he is, and it sounded like the beginnings of a stump speech.

A terrible stump speech at that. If what Biden took away from the 2016 election was that qualifications rule the day, I’d urge him to ask Hillary Clinton how consoling her impeccable credentials are and then to educate me on the gold-plated wonders of Trump’s CV.

A national poll two weeks ago showed that Biden was far ahead of other Democrats in a hypothetical primary field, winning the favor of 25 percent of respondents in comparison with 15 percent for Bernie Sanders, 13 for Hillary Clinton, 9 for Beto O’Rourke and under 5 each for Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker and Kamala Harris. He’s an admirable person. How I wish that mattered more in terms of the outcome of a presidential election than it obviously does. He pressed



on with public service long after he could have cashed in. His devotion to his family is palpable; his strength through its tragedies, extraordinary. He’s informed, he’s affable and he’s real.

But is he the best bet? The difference between four and eight years of Trump could be everything; this is a time for ruthlessly unemotional calculation. Show me persuasive evidence that the president’s most fearsome adversary is an avocado and I’ll whip up the corresponding paraphernalia: Make America Guac Again.

Biden, who followed 36 years as a senator from Delaware with eight as Obama’s vice president, has many. His record is one of them. There’s prodigious accomplishment there but also trouble: his stern treatment of Anita Hill when she appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee, of which he was chairman; his role as an ambassador for the financial services industry in Delaware; his key part in the passage of crime bills that ended up punishing African-Americans disproportionately. None of that jibes with his party’s current priorities and mood.

While Biden, at 76, is only four years older than Trump, Democrats have had more luck over recent decades with presidential candidates younger than their Republican opponents. “In the last century, the party has never won with a non-incumbent who was older than 52,” Thor Hogan, who teaches politics at Earlham College, wrote in The Washington Post recently.

Biden’s problem isn’t just age. A candidate can be old in years and relatively new to presidential politics (Elizabeth Warren, 69; Mike Bloomberg, 76) or old in years and the champion of new directions (Bernie Sanders, 77). Neither of those descriptions applies to Biden.

His party can’t get enough of the word “progressive,” but he’s regressive, symbolizing a step back to an administration past. Don’t get me wrong: That’s infinitely preferable to the indecent present. But it’s a questionable campaign slogan.

He has said that he’ll decide in the next month or two whether to run — whether he’s willing to spend that much time away from his grandchildren. For their sake, I hope he stays on the sidelines. For our sake, too.

Frank Bruni is a columnist for the New York Times.