

Nonaffiliated voters could be given their own primary

Secretary of State taps former political rival to develop bill

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — The growing bloc of Oregonians who don't belong to any political party could have more say in elections under a new proposal from Secretary of State Dennis Richardson.

Richardson got the idea from a former rival: Alan Zundel, the Pacific Green Party's candidate for secretary of state in 2016.

Since the election, Richardson, a Republican, and Zundel have formed what, on its face, is an unlikely alliance between people with disparate political views.

Two years ago, Richardson tapped the retired political science professor to lead a task force studying how the state draws legislative and congressional districts.

And now Richardson's office is advocating for Senate Bill 225, which is based on a concept Zundel suggested to him last year. It would allow nonaffiliated voters to participate in their own primary.

"I've been interested in how our electoral process works for a long time, particularly in how the two-party system limits competition and keeps the voting public from exposure to more than just two points of view on issues," Zundel said.

When Zundel was seeking office, the Pacific Green Party came the closest to aligning with his beliefs, but he's spent most of about a decade in Oregon as a non-affiliated voter, he said.

Under current law, non-affiliated Oregonians can vote in primary elections only for nonpartisan positions such as for judge.

They have no primary vote in races set up by party, such as state representative or governor.

Richardson and Zundel want the state's 880,000 nonaffiliated voters — who now outnumber registered Republicans — to be able to choose nonaffiliated candidates for those partisan offices.

"Although nearly one-third of Oregon voters are not affiliated with any political party, those nonaffiliated voters often feel left out of the primary process in the current system," Steve Elzinga, Richardson's governmental and legal affairs director, told lawmakers on



Staff photo by E.J. Harris/File
A bundle of ballots sits in a bin after elections officials verify voter signatures on election night, Nov. 6, 2018, at the Umatilla County Elections Division offices in Pendleton.

Wednesday, Jan. 30.

Under the proposal, non-affiliated candidates could enter a state-run primary where nonaffiliated voters could cast a ballot for the nonaffiliated candidate they preferred.

The winning nonaffiliated candidate would go to the general election in November and be an option for all voters in that contest.

Officials from Richardson's office shared the proposal last week with senators at a meeting of a committee focused on campaign finance laws.

State Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, expressed concerns about allowing nonaffiliated voters to participate in a major party primary and

potentially "sabotage" the outcome.

The bill wouldn't do that, though, Elzinga clarified.

"It creates a new, effectively, a new party for non-affiliated voters," Elzinga responded.

"They have their own separate primary for voting on nonaffiliated candidates, and the top nonaffiliated candidate goes to the general election as the nonaffiliated nominee."

Major party candidates would be ineligible to win the nonaffiliated primary election "so it doesn't create a proxy battle," Elzinga said.

Major parties have the option of opening their primaries to all voters.

Republicans and Democrats typically keep their

primaries closed to party members. The Independent Party of Oregon decided to allow nonaffiliated voters to participate in its primary last May. Nonaffiliated voters could request a special ballot from the Secretary of State's office to take part.

A second proposal from Richardson could apply to the roughly 45,000 Oregonians who belong to the state's five minor parties — the Libertarian, Constitution, Working Families, Progressive and Pacific Green.

Oregon laws "benefit long-established major parties at the expense of smaller parties," Elzinga told lawmakers.

Members of those parties can select a general election candidate through a party-run process. Richardson has proposed allowing the state to pay for and run those primaries instead.

"I will tell you, frankly, some of the minor parties are not excited about that," Elzinga said. "They like the current process, and so we don't feel it's appropriate to require them to do so, but to give them that option at least at that time, I think is a good starting point."

The state would pay about \$140,000 to run the nonaffiliated primary every election year, and \$140,000 per minor party that chooses

to participate in a state-funded primary.

Richardson's proposal is now before the Senate Rules Committee, where its fate is uncertain.

Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, chairs the committee.

"That's undecided," a spokesman for Burdick said in an email Friday. "Basically it's too early to tell for sure."

Zundel is clear-eyed about the obstacle his idea faces in a Legislature where all legislators represent the major parties.

"Making it easier for nonaffiliated candidates to get on the ballot is going to increase the possibility that they'll have competition," Zundel said. "And I think they're less afraid of competition, per se, and more afraid of splitting the vote, causing somebody to lose an election who may have had a majority if there wasn't another candidate in the race."

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Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Turning sunny; very cold	Partly sunny and cold	Cloudy, snow showers; cold	Cloudy, a bit of snow; very cold	Mostly cloudy and very cold
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
27° 10°	30° 17°	31° 24°	32° 16°	20° 15°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
31° 13°	31° 18°	32° 25°	32° 21°	26° 19°

OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	24°	18°
Normals	44°	28°
Records	65° (2015)	-12° (1989)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.16"
Month to date	0.77"
Normal month to date	0.23"
Year to date	2.84"
Last year to date	1.85"
Normal year to date	1.61"

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	26°	23°
Normals	45°	29°
Records	61° (1967)	-10° (1989)

PRECIPITATION

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.27"
Month to date	0.68"
Normal month to date	0.17"
Year to date	2.21"
Last year to date	1.24"
Normal year to date	1.45"

WINDS (in mph)

	Today	Thu.
Boardman	NE 4-8	NE 4-8
Pendleton	WNW 4-8	NNE 4-8

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:11 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:08 p.m.
Moonrise today	8:21 a.m.
Moonset today	7:05 p.m.

First Full Last New

Feb 12 Feb 19 Feb 26 Mar 6

BRIEFLY

Clark County sheriff will enforce gun measure

VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — The Clark County Sheriff's Office has announced that it will enforce a controversial gun-control measure passed by voters last November.

The *Columbian* reports that the announcement came Saturday that noted that while Initiative 1639 was being challenged in court, the sheriff's office intended to heed the new law for now.

I-1639 was passed last year by Washington voters with 59 percent of the vote. The measure requires safe storage for firearms and increases the age limit to buy a gun to 21. It also redefines many guns as "semi-automatic assault" rifles while strengthening the background check required to purchase a firearm.

Several other sheriffs in Washington have said they won't enforce the measure.

Children sled down one of Seattle's steeper hills on Monday. Western Washington was hit by a major winter storm, with several inches of snow, cold temperatures and bone-chilling winds overnight and into the day Monday.

AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Intel confirms plans for factory

PORTLAND (AP) — Intel has acknowledged it will soon start building a massive new semiconductor factory in Hillsboro.

The *Oregonian*/OregonLive reports the company told about 50 residents living near its Ronler Acres campus that it will build a third phase of its massive DIX manufacturing complex.

Intel also said it plans a

new technology building to support the factory with emergency generators, utilities and additional parking.

Hillsboro city officials say the chipmaker recently submitted construction permit applications but the city has yet to provide documents.

The chipmaker says it plans to start work in Hillsboro sometime in 2019 but plans remain contingent on unspecified business and economic factors.

SECRETARY OF STATE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

Oregon Department of Agriculture, Pesticides Program, Administrative Rules Chapter #603, Seán Fornelli, Rules Coordinator, (503) 986-4758. Adopt: 603-057-0392. RULE SUMMARY: This rule prohibits the application of any product containing aminocyclopyrachlor on certain defined rights-of-way; natural areas; restoration areas; marshes, swamps, bogs, and wetlands unless all conditions in an exception are met. This rule prohibits the application of any product containing aminocyclopyrachlor by any type of aerial application method. This rule prohibits the application of any product containing aminocyclopyrachlor in areas where the roots of desirable trees or shrubs may extend; on the inner or outer banks of ditches or canals; or in certain proximity to greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) leks (mating areas).

Hearing Dates: February 15, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. Location: Deschutes County Road Department, 61150 SE 27th St., Bend, OR; February 22, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. Location: Oregon Department of Agriculture, Hearing Room, 635 Capitol St. NE, Salem, OR. Last Day for public comment is February 26, 2019 at 5:00 p.m.

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