

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

CLACKAMAS COUNTY

Investigation of ballot fiasco requested

BY GILLIAN FLACCUS AND SARA CLINE
Associated Press

A Democratic state lawmaker from Happy Valley is calling for a formal investigation into a ballot-printing fiasco that will delay results from Tuesday's primary by weeks in the state's third-largest county, with a key U.S. House race hanging in the balance.

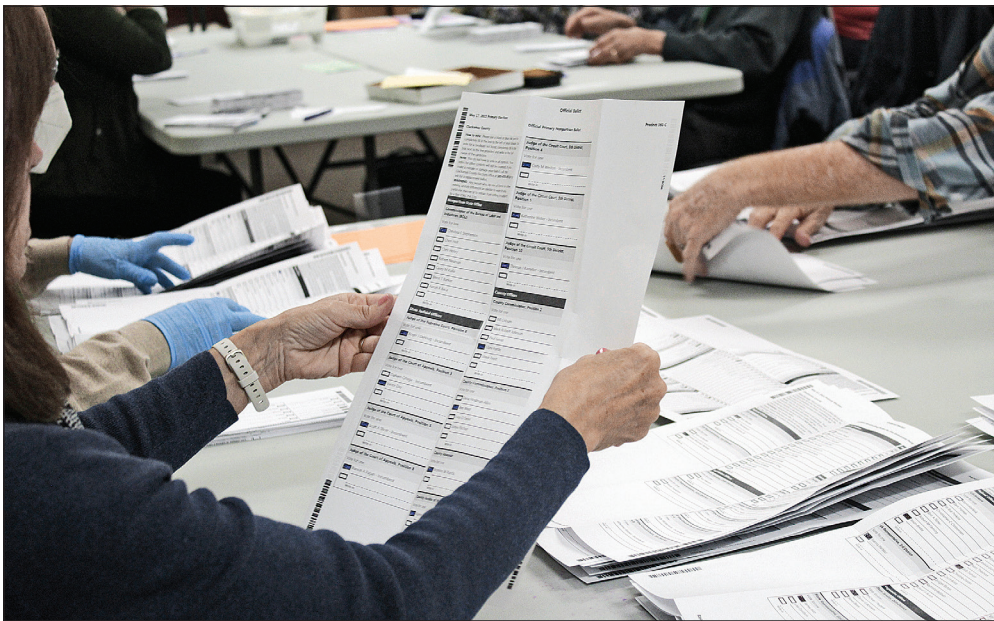
The call from Rep. Janelle Bynum, who represents voters in part of the affected county, comes amid mounting pressure Friday on Clackamas County Elections Clerk Sherry Hall, who has overseen elections in the suburban county south of Portland for nearly 20 years.

Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan said Friday she had requested a written plan from Hall showing how she will get the votes counted by June 13, which is Oregon's deadline to certify the election results.

Bynum, the state lawmaker, called the situation "unreasonable, and untenable" in a statement lambasting Hall, who is up for reelection in November.

"Despite having time to prepare for an Election Day disaster, Ms. Hall has repeatedly failed to adapt and accept enough help to remedy the current crisis," she said. "When voters cast their ballots, they deserve efficient, transparent and integrity-driven processes to determine who wins those elections."

The debacle has angered many in Oregon, where all ballots have been cast only by mail for 23 years and lawmakers have consistently pushed to expand voter access through automatic voter



An election worker examines a ballot at the Clackamas County Elections office on Thursday. Ballots with blurry bar codes that can't be read by vote-counting machines will delay election results by weeks in the primary for the 5th Congressional District, which includes Bend and Redmond.

registration, expanded deadlines and other measures. It's also thrown into question the race for the 5th Congressional District, a redrawn district that stretches from the edges of Portland, through a large portion of Clackamas County, crosses the Cascades and takes in Bend and Redmond.

In the Democratic primary, seven-term Rep. Kurt Schrader, a moderate, was trailing in the vote behind progressive challenger Jamie McLeod-Skinner. The outcome could have an outsized impact in November, with the possibility that voters could flip the seat for the GOP.

State Republicans were also paying close attention to the ballot catastrophe, including GOP gubernatorial nominee and former Oregon House Minority Leader Christine Drazan, who had to wait longer than expected for results

Tuesday night that ultimately declared her the winner of the Republican's crowded primary. Drazan urged voters with concerns to go to the elections offices, where people can watch election workers through several large windows as they open and count ballots and — in this case — transfer votes to new ballots.

State Sen. Bill Kenemer, a Republican whose district includes much of Clackamas County, called the ballot issues "alarming and concerning" and said he hoped the crisis would prompt fixes to the system.

"I would really love to see us after we get through this crisis, take some deep breaths and get some experts in there that we have confidence with, and then start looking where our chinks in our armor are and what do we need to fix it," he told the Associated Press on

Friday.

Hall used Moonlight BPO in Bend — a printer not used for ballots by any other county — and said she has used them for 10 years without any problems. A man who answered the phone Friday at Moonlight BPO said no one was available to comment and said he would forward the inquiry to someone by email.

"We have talked about that piece, of proofing them after they're printed, but we have 447 ballot styles, and so we would need a few proofs of each ballot style," Hall told the AP. "But then if we had good proofs but at the end of the batch the toner is running low and not intense enough — like is what the problem is now — then we wouldn't see every ballot."

As many as 60,000 ballots are unreadable by vote-counting machines because of

blurry bar codes and up to 200 county employees were being redeployed starting Thursday from their normal duties to hand-transfer the voter's intent to a fresh ballot that could be scanned.

The process is painstaking, and by Friday just 23,000 ballots had been tallied.

Hall said the problem came to light May 3, when workers put the first ballots returned through the vote-counting machine. About 70 or 80 ballots from each batch of 125 were spit out as unreadable because their bar codes were more faint and slightly blurred. It was too late to print and mail new ballots, she said.

As Election Day approached and ballots stacked up, Hall said she allowed elections workers to take the weekend off because just three people signed up to work Saturday or Sunday. Most elec-

tion workers are "between the ages of 70 and 85" and they need rest, she said.

Fagan said her office offered Hall help twice after the problem came to light, but Hall said her county had enough resources. She did take on a few county employees on May 11, more than a week after learning of the issue, and dozens more were mobilized starting Thursday after the County Commission had an emergency meeting and pressed her.

State elections officials say they have little authority over the nonpartisan local county elections officials, who operate independently and are beholden to voters. Hall is up for reelection in November after holding the job since 2003 and is facing off against a longtime elections administrator and former librarian named Catherine McMullen.

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— Sherry Hall, Clackamas County Elections Clerk, below



Salinas, Erickson, win primaries in new Oregon 6th District

Associated Press

State Rep. Andrea Salinas has won the Democratic primary in Oregon's new 6th U.S. House district.

Salinas, who has maintained her lead as more ballots have been

counted from Tuesday's primary, would be Oregon's first Hispanic congresswoman if elected in November.

She was endorsed by Massachusetts Democratic Sen. Elizabeth War-

ren, a standard-bearer for the party's progressive wing.

Earlier this week Democratic candidate Carrick Flynn conceded to Salinas.

On the Republican side Mike Er-

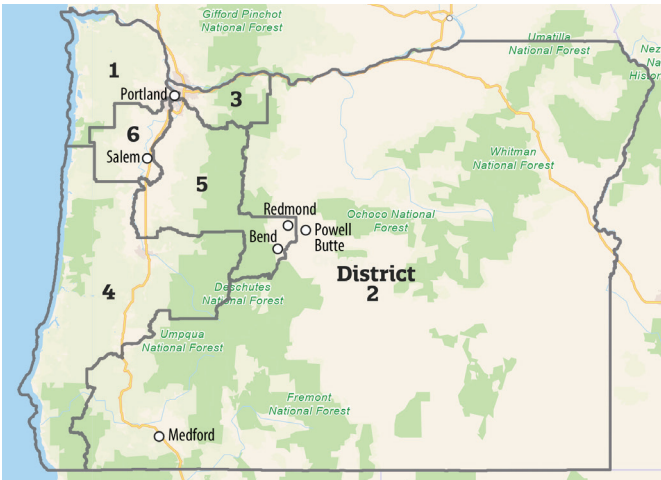
ickson, a Lake Oswego businessman, has advanced to the November election in the 6th.

Money poured into the Democratic race for the newly created 6th Congressional District seat that fea-

tured Flynn, a relatively unknown political newcomer backed by a cryptocurrency kingpin and Salinas, a three-term state lawmaker.

The district is located southwest of Portland.

Money poured into the Democratic race for the newly created 6th Congressional District seat that featured Flynn, a relatively unknown political newcomer backed by a cryptocurrency kingpin and Salinas, a three-term state lawmaker.



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