

EDITOR'S DESK

Your guide to making sure your vote counts

Election Day isn't until Nov. 3, but another deadline looms nearer: The deadline to register to vote in Oregon is Oct. 13.

Each year around election time I see a lot of confusion and misinformation around voting, some of which can prevent people from exercising their right to help choose the people who represent them in government. I hope that the following advice can help make sure that your voice is heard.

Whether you vote in every election, you've never voted or you're not entirely sure if you ever registered in Oregon, visit the Oregon Secretary of State's website at www.oregonvotes.gov today to make sure you're ready for Nov. 3. To check on your registration status as an Oregon voter, click on the "My Vote" button and enter your name and birth date.

If there is no record listed but you thought you were registered to vote, contact your county elections office to help determine what the problem may be. Umatilla County's elections office can be reached at 541-278-6254 and Morrow County's number is 541-676-5604. They can also assist you if you don't have internet access.

If you already know you've never registered to vote before, you can do so online by clicking the "Register to Vote" button at oregonvotes.gov and providing the necessary information, including your driver's license number or Social Security number. You



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NEWS EDITOR



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File /East Oregonian

Bundles of ballots sit in trays waiting to be opened prior to the November 2019 election at the

can also print out a physical copy of a voter registration card and mail it to your county elections office, or visit the office to fill one out in person.

If you check your voter registration and you are marked as "inactive," that means you will not receive a ballot unless you submit a new voter registration card. Your registration may be marked as inactive if a ballot mailed to you was returned as undeliverable, you were incarcerated for a felony, you haven't voted in at least five years or your last ballot was challenged.

If you check your voter registration and it shows you are an active voter, double-check to make sure all of the information, including your address and political party affiliation,

is correct. If anything needs updated, you can click on the "Update my registration" button at the bottom of the screen.

It's important to note here that if you update your registration during the two week period between when an election takes place and when the results are officially certified, the change will not take effect until after the election is certified. This caused a lot of conspiracy theories in May 2020 when people attempted to change their party affiliation a few days after the primary election and were certain elections officials were plotting to prevent people from registering as Republicans.

After the deadline to register to vote has passed, ballots will be

mailed starting Oct. 14. If you are correctly registered to vote but still have not seen a ballot in your mailbox as Nov. 3 approaches, never fear. You can call your county elections office and ask for a new one to be sent, or, if you are worried you will not be able to receive a new one in time, you can visit the elections office and fill one out in person up until 8 p.m. on election night.

If you receive your ballot in the mail, you can fill it out, sign it and send it back through the mail (no postage stamp required), where it will be counted by the county elections office as long as they receive it by 8 p.m. on Nov. 3. If you are concerned about your ballot making it there on time, you can also drop it at a secure ballot drop box until 8 p.m. on Nov. 3. Hermiston's drop box is located in the drive-thru at city hall, and a full list of locations can be found at oregonvotes.gov.

If your signature on your ballot doesn't match the one on file with the elections office, or something else looks fishy, you may receive notification that your ballot was challenged. If that happens, you will have 14 days to provide evidence to the county clerk that it was you who cast that vote. And remember: Attempting to vote in two different states, submit two ballots in Oregon, lie on your registration or other forms of voter fraud are felonies that the system is well-designed to catch. I wouldn't try it.

Good luck!

COLUMN

Stop denying the impact of fuel in big fires

There are no adjectives that adequately describe the devastation that wildfires have brought to the West in the last month.

At least 33 people are known to have died in the fires, and the damage to lives, livelihoods and property cannot be calculated.

Western governors — Kate Brown, Jay Inslee and Gavin Newsom — were quick to place the blame on climate change. Citing climate change tells not even half the story.

Dry conditions certainly are a contributing factor in the spread of the fires. The real culprit is the decades-long increase in the understory fuel load that feeds these massive fires. And this fuel load has been allowed to build because of a combination of public policy and environmental lawsuits that have severely reduced logging on public lands and efforts such as prescribed burns and selective thinning to treat the problem.

Fire is a natural part of for-

est ecology. Low-intensity fires periodically cleared out the grasses, brush and small trees that flourish in the understory. The government aggressively fights wildfires on public lands, which is completely warranted when those fires threaten people and private property.

Without fire, the forests have become more densely packed with vegetation.

Thinning and prescribed burning of dense stands within national forests is the federal government's main preventive approach to the problem, but even the largest of these projects that span 10,000 acres or more are modest compared to the 160 million acres the U.S. Forest Service manages in the West.

And in many cases it takes years to get these projects through regulatory and court challenges that attend any actions on public lands.

So, when the forest catches fire the dense understory causes it to burst into the canopy. Add

the 60 mph winds that drove the fires in the Northwest 10 days ago, and you have a conflagration of epic proportions.

Yes, dry conditions have played a part in this drama.

Putting the blame on climate change is convenient for progressive politicians who have a policy agenda. But implementing all of the climate legislation dreamed up by environmentalists would not impact the existing climate for decades, if at all.

Remember, though, that fire has been a part of the forest for millennia. Even if the climate could be returned to some ideal "norm," today's forests would still burn, and burn intensely.

We know how to prevent big fires today, and that's by removing the fuel — whether by letting more fires burn, cutting more timber, prescribed burns, selective thinning or a combination thereof.

This viewpoint was written as an editorial by EO Media Group newspapers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Jim Doherty has the character for commissioner

I confidently endorse Jim Doherty for reelection as Morrow County Commissioner. During his first term serving Morrow County, Commissioner Doherty has proven his leadership ability not only for Morrow County, but as serving as President of Association of Oregon Counties. The last time a first term commissioner served in that role was 1905. The ability to lead his peers shows Commissioner Doherty's assets in areas critical to that role — organization, mediator, and strength of character.

Commissioner Doherty serves Morrow County from the viewpoint of caretaker. He was born and raised in the South end of the county. Jim and Kelly have raised their family and built a life in the North end. If something impacts Morrow County, it impacts Commissioner Doherty.

Commissioner Doherty has demonstrated his deep love and concern for our citizens by seeking out those among us who need help. He has assisted the Boardman Food Pantry in the beginning stages of its establishment by advocating and seeking funds for a permanent location. In May, when the windstorm ripped through Boardman, Commissioner Doherty stepped up to the plate when residents needed help not only getting out from under the chaos that ensued, but also a voice.

My family and I have lived down the road from the Doherty family for about 10 years. We have done business with them and admire the ethics that Jim Doherty has exhibited. As neighbors, we have called on them when we needed help. Jim has always shown up when we needed him. Through our experiences with Jim Doherty over the years, we have seen compassion, responsibility, and a strong belief that each of us needs to do our part to make Morrow County the best it can be. Jim Doherty has the vision and integrity to carry Morrow County through the growth and changes while preserving the honor of our county. His commitment to our way of life and the insight he brings to the development of our county is worthy of our vote in November.

Mary A. Killion
Boardman

CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call (541) 564-4533 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Expanded death notices will be published at no charge. These include information about services. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at hermistonherald.com/obituaryform, by email to obits@hermistonherald.com, by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, x221.