

Absentee ballot rules block some voters from state and local races

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

When Bonnie Ducic got her ballot in the mail, she thought there must be some mistake.

Ducic has been a missionary in Croatia for about 20 years, but as a United States citizen she can still request an absentee ballot from Umatilla County, where she uses her parents' home in Hermiston as her permanent stateside address. In the past, Ducic has been able to vote in local and statewide elections, she said. But this time when she got her ballot, all races except the federal ones had been crossed out with a black marker.

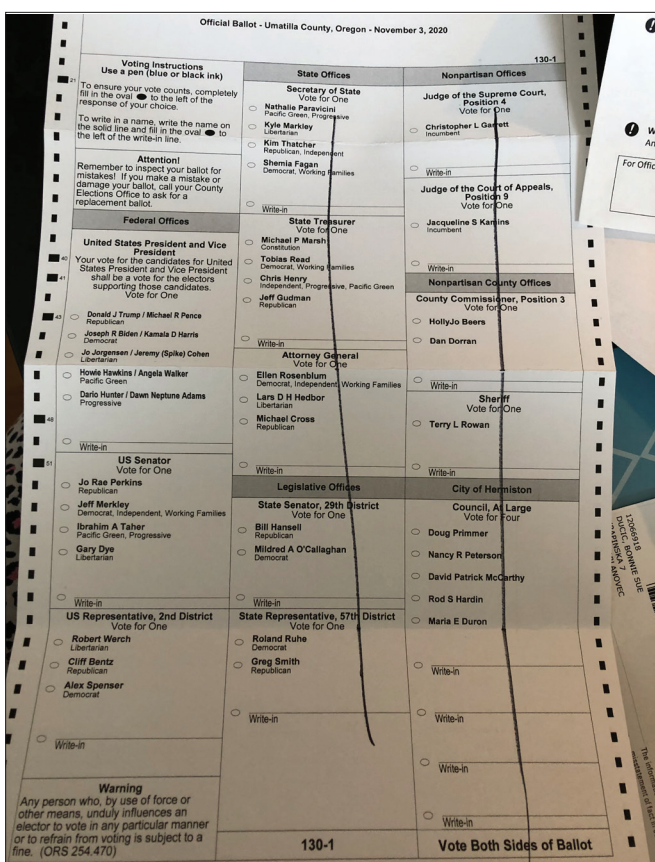
"It was a shock to see it that way," she said.

In Oregon, when residents overseas request an absentee ballot, they fill out a form that gives them several options to describe their current status. One of those options states, "I am a U.S. citizen living outside the country, and my return is uncertain."

Kim Lindell, Umatilla County elections manager, said in an email that Oregon citizens who choose that option are only eligible to vote in federal races, which is why Ducic received a ballot with the other races crossed out.

Ducic says she didn't do anything different for this election from past elections; Lindell says records show she recently changed her status to "indefinite." Either way, Ducic said she feels she should be able to vote in local races even if she doesn't know exactly when she might return to the United States.

"If my vote is important enough that I'm allowed to vote federal, why is it not important enough for me to vote state and county?" she



Bonnie Ducic/Contributed Photo

Bonnie Ducic submitted this photo of the absentee ballot she requested while living in Croatia.

said.

She said she previously lived in Multnomah County, but since she went overseas has kept up on local politics through discussions with her parents, and hopes to come back and live in the Hermiston area sometime in the future.

"When I return, that's kind of where I hope to move, so I feel like it's kind of a responsibility to keep up with what's going on and help the community be somewhere where I would want to return to," she said.

While all voting in Oregon is done by mail instead of in-person polling stations, residents who will be in another state or another country when ballots are mailed out can request an absentee ballot be mailed to a different location.

Voters who are serving in

the military or living overseas must use the Federal Absentee Ballot Request Form, found at www.fvap.gov. Those who will be inside the territorial United States — college students attending an out-of-state school, for example — can fill out the state absentee ballot form, found at www.oregonvotes.gov.

Lindell said overseas and military ballots usually go out 45 days prior to the election. Out-of-state absentee ballots go out 30 days prior to the election, while all other types of ballots are sent out between 20 and seven days before the election, which this year falls on Nov. 3.

According to the Oregon Secretary of State's website, overseas and military voters can mail their ballots to the county elec-



tions office where their ballot came from, but it must be received, not just post-marked, by 8 p.m. on election night. Because international mail times can be unreliable, overseas and military voters also have an option of submitting their signed ballot via fax or email if they also submit a "secret ballot waiver form" acknowledging that sending the ballot in that way does not give them the same level of secrecy that a sealed envelope would.

Lindell encouraged anyone with questions about their ballot or registration to contact the county elections office at 541-278-6254 or elections@umatillacounty.net.

"Our office goes to great lengths to get ballots in the hands of every eligible voter," she said.

Ducic encouraged people to vote, and said the reason she is disappointed about only being able to vote for the federal races this time around is because it is important for everyone to have a voice.

"Of course everyone has a right to vote whatever their personal preference is, but we can't complain about the state of the place that we live in if we aren't trying to effect change," she said.

BRIEFS

Turkey Shoot fundraiser benefits Hermiston High School golf team

The 16th annual Bob Brinkley Memorial Turkey Shoot fundraiser golf tournament is accepting team and individual entries for its Saturday, Nov. 21, event held at Big River Golf Course, 709 Willamette St., Umatilla.

The tournament begins with a 9:30 a.m. shotgun start for all teams.

The four-person scramble format tournament costs \$50 per person, which includes greens fees but not cart rental. Teams are asked to sign up with the names and handicaps (or average score) of each team member, and individuals entering are requested to indicate a preferred foursome.

Payment can be made by check when dropping off the entry form, or by credit/debit card the day of the tournament at the golf course.

Those wishing to reserve a cart should call the golf course at 541-922-3006 by Nov. 13.

Entry forms are available from tournament directors Pat Kerrigan (541-571-0166) and Josh Browning (541-720-4542), and completed forms can be mailed to HHS Golf Association, 600 S. First St., Hermiston, OR 97838 or dropped off at the golf course.

Proceeds from the tournament benefit the Hermiston High School golf team.

Holiday bazaar includes fundraiser for Irrigon Fire Department's Holiday Basket Program

A holiday bazaar and fundraiser is planned for Saturday, Oct. 24, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Irrigon Plaza, next to Irrigon City Hall, 500 N.E. Main Ave.

The bazaar will feature more than 30 vendors and offer a variety of holiday gift ideas. Masks will be required and social distancing protocols will be observed.

Nonperishable food and cash donations also will be accepted for the Irrigon Fire Department's Holiday Basket Program.

People who are interested in being a vendor, or those wanting more information, can call Irrigon City Manager Aaron Palmquist at 541-922-3047 or email manager@ci.irrigon.or.us.

Medicare open enrollment has started

The open enrollment period for Medicare patients started Oct. 15 and runs through Dec. 7. The period is the only opportunity to change coverage.

Good Shepherd Health Care System is offering free, confidential appointments with trained consultants who can help patients shop for the right plan or enroll for the first time. To request an appointment call 541-667-3509.

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We've Reopened!

We have opened the Museum Store and Kinship Café for limited hours, **Tuesday through Saturday, 11am-2pm.** The permanent exhibits are not open. Kinship Café is offering take-out orders only, with a limited menu. Call 541.429.7702 to have your order ready upon arrival.

Please note that safety measures will be in force with masks and social distancing required. We look forward to seeing everyone again!

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