

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Voting: Use it or lose it?

Citizens in many countries throughout the world are passionate about voting, and many have given their lives in an effort to vote. That kind of voter suppression doesn't occur in the United States.

Voter suppression is happening in the U.S., however, but few Americans seem to be concerned. Under the guise of preventing voter fraud, a few states have passed laws with identification requirements that many people won't be able to meet.

One has outlawed voter registration drives by volunteer organizations such as the League of Women Voters. A few others have ID requirements that make it impossible for students from out of state to vote, because they are not "permanent residents". Still others require voters to present their birth certificates to register, or if they are already registered, when they go to their polling place. Others require a state photo ID, which many elderly or disabled people don't have; of course they also need a birth certificate in order to get the state ID. Again, many elderly people were born at home and their births may or may not have been filed.

We don't have any of those impediments in Oregon. We can pick up a voter registration form at the Post Office, city hall, the DMV, and other locations. Then we can fill it out and mail it to the elections office. We don't even have to go to a polling place to vote. Our ballots come to us in the mail more than two weeks before they are due, so we can fill them out at our leisure. Then we can either mail them back to the courthouse, or drop them off at a legal drop site.

Still, few of us vote. Are we too lazy? Is it too easy? Or are we just willing to let others decide for us?



### Out of My Mind...

by Noni Andersen



Ballots are arriving for the January 31 special election for Oregon's First Congressional District, and many voters are still pondering who will receive their vote. Most of the ballots will be cast for Democrat Suzanne Bonamici, who was also nominated by the Independent Party, or Republican Rob Cornilles. Both of them are Washington County residents, are married and have families.

Regardless of any differences, and despite how candidates frame issues during a campaign, any voter who has paid even a modicum of attention to Congress knows that a candidate's positions will undergo some changes once they have been elected. Most changes are minimal, but learning how to maneuver as one of 435 Representatives (or 100 Senators), combined with the pressures of partisan considerations and party mentors, will sometimes result in changes that are major.

Because of those inevitable pressures, I feel that candidates' backgrounds are important because they can provide some indication of how those pressures will be handled. For instance: Have they held elective office? If not, they are less likely to be effective in the give and take of policy negotiations. Elective offices, including local boards and councils, are usually the incuba-

tors for competent officials in higher positions.

Education is important, too, but not just for academic degrees. I've known too many outstanding people, both with and without degrees, to think a degree is the only indication of intelligence. Nevertheless, when a candidate sticks with higher education long enough to graduate, that indicates some determination to complete goals. If a candidate has worked his/her way through college, I consider that a plus, particularly if they completed post-graduate work.

Work backgrounds are also important, not what they do, but whether their work pattern shows increasing responsibility.

Suzanne Bonamici has held increasingly responsible elective positions, most recently as state senator; she worked her way through Lane Community College, the University of Oregon, and the University of Oregon law school; worked for Legal Aid, the Federal Trade Commission and in private law practice, a career pattern that has demonstrated increasing responsibility for decision-making.

That responsibility included heading the state Legislature's bipartisan redistricting committee, which, for the first time in six decades, completed the process, instead of deadlocking and turning the job over to the Secretary of State. Redistricting legislative districts is one of the thorniest processes in state government, which is why the legislature has failed at it for 60 years.

Cornilles has no prior elective experience. He graduated from Brigham Young University and eventually started his own business, Game

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