

By Steve Trout

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Despite challenges brought by the coronavirus pandemic, Oregon's May 19th Primary Election will go on as scheduled. Our proven vote by mail system means we don't have to be concerned with social distancing issues at polling places that so many other states are struggling with. For the first time in Oregon, ballots can be returned without a stamp since the state has provided prepaid return postage. Ballots can still be delivered to an official dropbox if you prefer.

Election processes have been underway for weeks now and ballots and the voters' pamphlet are at the printer being prepared to be mailed out. Ballots for our military and overseas voters have already been mailed. The voters' pamphlet containing voting information, candidate statements and measure arguments, should arrive at every residential address in Oregon April 22-24. It also contains a voter registration form inside for anyone who is not yet registered. Ballots will start being mailed to registered voters on April 29th.

The May 19th election is a primary election. Primaries serve two main purposes. The first is for all voters to be able to cast ballots for candidates for nonpartisan offices like judges and some county and other local offices. The second is for the voters registered with a major political party to select their nominees for partisan office like US President, Oregon Secretary of State, Treasurer and Attorney General and legislators at both the state and national level.

Those 40+% of Oregonians registered as not affiliated with a political party, or registered with a minor party (Constitution, Independent, Libertarian, Pacific Green, Progressive, Working Families) will receive a ballot that includes only nonpartisan offices. In the May Primary, only registered Republicans will be able to vote to choose their nominees for partisan offices, and only registered Democrats will be able to vote to choose their nominees for partisan offices. The US Supreme Court has ruled that political parties get to decide who votes in their primaries so those 1.2 million of you registered as not affiliated with a political party or registered with a minor party will not have candidates for President or any partisan office on your May primary ballot. This is not a mistake. You **will have them** on your November 3 ballot.

If you desire to register to vote, update your registration, or change your political party, the deadline is April 28th but do it as soon as possible. As always, go to your trusted source of election information at oregonvotes.gov. Oregon is one of the easiest places to register and vote. At the beginning of April there were 2,854,691 Oregonians registered to vote. That means 91% of those that are eligible to vote are registered to vote. That compares to 10 years ago where we had 2,033,951 registered voters and 71% of those eligible to vote were registered to vote.

We encourage all Oregonians to be registered to vote with your most current information, to study the voters' pamphlet, and to participate in our elections this year. The time to engage is now! Visit oregonvotes.gov/myvote to check your registration and update it if necessary.