

Community Comment
June 7, 2016

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a community comment.

Today is Tuesday, June 7. I think we all know what today's significance is. It's National Chocolate Ice Cream Day.

It's also Election Day. If you haven't already been to the polls or mailed in your ballot, this is a reminder to please schedule it in your day.

It's easy to get into the trap of thinking our vote doesn't matter—but it does. Not only does it matter to the candidate who is elected—or not—only people who vote have the right to criticize the outcome.

There are almost as many ways to vote as there are states. I've lived in five states and the District of Columbia and they all had different voting logistics. One had an open primary (Virginia); one had antiquated voting machines (New York), and one had vote by mail (Oregon).

I was living in Oregon in 1981 when the Oregon Legislative Assembly approved vote-by-mail for local elections only, at the discretion of the county; at least one polling place in the county had to remain open on Election Day. I lived in one of the first counties that tried it out. I was skeptical. Wouldn't there be mail fraud? That was then, this is now. I am fully behind the single form of voting-by-mail procedure.

Getting to an all vote-by-mail voting method was not an overnight process in Oregon. The effort continued past 1981.

- 1987 Vote-by-mail became permanent, with the majority of Oregon's counties making use of it. It was still optional.
- 1989 A House bill to extend vote-by-mail to include the 1990 primary elections was defeated in a 33 to 27 vote.

But they didn't give up. They used the effective "we'll save money if we vote-by-mail" argument.

- 1995 Oregon became the first state to conduct a federal primary election totally by mail.
- 1996 U.S Senator Ron Wyden was elected by mail with a 66% turnout.

Two years later Oregonians confirmed their overwhelming support for vote-by-mail by passing Measure 60. Measure 60 eliminated restrictions on vote-by-mail and established it as the single form of voting for elections in Oregon. It also required vote-by-mail to be used for all elections as well as eliminating polling places.

- 2000 Oregon becomes the first state in the nation to conduct a presidential election entirely by mail. About 80% of registered voters participated.

Nearly 80 percent! Wouldn't it be great to have that kind of turnout for an election in Humboldt County?

I used to think I would miss going to the polls. But not anymore. If asked to choose, then I pick an 80% voter rate over to going to the polls. It's time for vote-by-mail as our single form of voting in California.

This has been Erin Dunn with a community comment.