

Chair & members of the committee, for the record my name is Becky Stockton & I reside in Helena.

Today, I come before you in opposition to HB 327 to allow youth to be election Judges. I am a Chief Election Judge here in Helena. I feel that we should not violate our state law by allowing unregistered 16 & 17 year olds to serve as election judges. It is stated in law that only registered election voters are available to serve as election judges. Registered voters by state and federal law are individuals who are 18 years of age or older.

The day of the primary election, the first Tuesday after the first Monday of June, will run in conflict with the youth who are attending High School. I checked online public school districts calendars around the state & found out that Election Day is held on the last week of school for 16 & 17 year olds. During that week students will be taking their finals. We should not be interfering with our students' education by having them serve as election judges. It would be a nightmare logistically for the election officials to plan working schedules around semester tests for these students in order for them to serve as election judges.

When it is time for public schools to have their school elections, school officials use judges from the county election judge pool. Do we want to have 16 & 17 year olds running public school bonds, levies & trustee elections?

I would like to offer several solutions to the shortage of judges. First, in the Montana Code Annotated 1-1-216, Legal holidays and business days, state employees are given the day off for Election Day. All of these state employees are then available to serve as an election judge; not only would they get paid for their holiday, they would also receive pay for working the election. To me that is a double incentive plus you are doing your civic duty by serving as a judge.

Another suggestion, in 2009 SOS Linda McCulloch announced that the Salish Kootenai College (SKC) received \$66,008 in federal grants from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to recruit college students to serve as nonpartisan poll workers during the 2009 and 2010 elections. SKC applied for the two-year grant earlier that year by submitting a budget and a project plan for activities supporting each election cycle. The proposal included a working relationship with Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) and both Lake and Flathead County elections office. Did this project work to increase the number of young people, college students who are registered voters to become election judges?

During the 2012 election, there was a group of young people who were very active in recruiting voters. This group was quoted in the articles posted in the Missoulian that they were going to all the colleges, universities & Native American campuses in Montana to register legal age voters. If a group like this can register, they claimed 10,000 voters, then I have confidence that they can recruit non-partisan judges to be placed in the pool for county election officials to select.

Because of these previous examples, I think we could and should have enough legal aged voters to serve as election judges that we do not need this bill to fill the void. There is plenty of legal age voting college students to serve as election judges.

I am not sure why schools are getting involved in elections. Their duty is to educate the youth as to how the election process works, not to recruit election judges for precinct polls, absentee ballot boards & counting boards. For those reasons, I ask the committee to vote "NO" on HB 327.

http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/pink-bunnies-claim-new-voters-registered/article_5ddcccee-ffb3-11e1-81c7-0019bb2963f4.html

Pink Bunnies claim 10,000 new voters registered

September 15, 2012 10:03 pm • [By KEILA SZPALLER of the Missoulian](#)
[\(1\) Comments](#)

The Pink Bunnies made big leaps this election season, registering a whopping 10,000 Montanans to vote, according to the Forward Montana Foundation.

That was the goal, and the army of costumed volunteers that worked more than 250 “bunny shifts” around the Big Sky State are pressing on with registrations despite laying claim Friday to pulling off the “largest nonpartisan voter registration drive in Montana history.”

The Missoulian couldn’t immediately confirm that the monster count also represents a record, but folks in Missoula only have to walk downtown on a Saturday to confirm the Pink Bunnies are famous here – and ubiquitous at the farmers markets. They’re folks wearing pink shirts and bunny ears who register people to vote. They have been since 2007, and they do so with bipartisan support.

Here’s former Democratic Congressman Pat Williams in a news release about the milestone: “Forward Montana Foundation has become the leading voter registration group in Montana ... and they are also the most fun.”

Here’s former Republican state Sen. John Brueggeman on the bunnies: “The Pink Bunnies make voting more accessible. That is democracy at its best ... I think it is fantastic that Forward Montana Foundation took on such a huge task and completely killed it. It makes me want to wear a bunny suit.”

And yes, Brueggeman indeed has worn a bunny suit, confirmed Forward Montana Chief Executive Officer Andrea Marcoccio. And she said Mayor John Engen stands ready and willing to don the costume, too. Williams’ willingness to dress in the voter registration uniform was unclear at press time.

In the drive, Pink Bunnies registered people from all 56 counties and canvassed in Missoula, Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman, Billings, Dillon, Butte and Kalispell. The 10,000 cards represent 1 percent of Montana’s population and 1.5 percent of all registered voters in Montana, according to Forward Montana’s analysis of 2010 census data and numbers from the Montana secretary of state.

“After interacting with thousands upon thousands of young voters from across the state, we are excited to see a major impact out of our demographic this cycle,” Marcoccio said in the news release by Forward Montana, which has a mission to create civically engaged youth.

So far in Missoula County, 80,224 people are registered to vote, said Vickie Zeier, elections administrator. And that number doesn’t include a couple of hundred of registration cards the county still needs to process. “Always in a presidential election year, we get the highest volume of voter registration cards,” Zeier said. In 2008, some 80,566 people were registered in the county, and Zeier anticipates this year’s count to surpass the one four years ago. The “regular” voter registration deadline is Oct. 9, and late registration begins after that date.

Zeier encouraged people to check their voter registration on myvoterpage.mt.gov as soon as possible to be sure their information is correct and current. For more information – and links to the secretary of state’s site – go to missoulavotes.com.

The website offers comprehensive voting information, including pertinent dates. It also has a flow chart of “voter scenarios,” which describe what to do if you are registered, not registered, have changed your address in the last two years, want an absentee ballot, or are a military or overseas voter; look under “forms” for “voter scenarios.”

For more information on upcoming local drives by Forward Montana, go to forwardmontana.org. Reporter Keila Szpaller can be reached at @KeilaSzpaller, 523-5262, keila.szpaller@missoulian.com or on MissoulaRedTape.com.

September 21, 2009

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McCulloch Announces Winner of Grant to Recruit College Poll Workers

HELENA - Secretary of State Linda McCulloch today announced that Salish Kootenai College (SKC) will receive \$66,008 in federal grants from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to recruit college students to serve as nonpartisan poll workers during the 2009 and 2010 elections.

SKC applied for the two-year grant earlier this year by submitting a budget and a project plan for activities supporting each election cycle. The proposal includes a working relationship with Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) and both Lake and Flathead County elections offices.

"Serving as a poll worker in college enhances a student's civic knowledge, which supports continued engagement in government and society. I applaud Salish Kootenai College and Flathead Valley Community College for supporting their local elections offices and for raising the bar on civic education," said McCulloch.

The EAC says each recipient's program employs a variety of methods to recruit poll workers, including those with specialized language and technical skills. SKC and FVCC will focus on recruiting those who speak the Salish and Kootenai languages to improve aid to Native American voters in Lake and Flathead counties.

"It is important that Indian people see some Indian poll workers when they walk into the voting area. This grant will help Lake and Flathead counties bring more of our underrepresented people to the polls," said SKC President Joe McDonald.

"This grant program will help us recruit the next generation of poll workers by focusing on recruiting and educating a new generation of Americans about the importance of civic participation on Election Day. This is a win-win project, and we're excited to partner with these groups," said Paula Robinson, Flathead County Clerk & Recorder.

"I look forward to supporting this program at the state level, because we all benefit from a diverse and well-educated group of election workers and volunteers," added McCulloch. "I encourage additional colleges and universities to consider similar programs."

The EAC awarded \$750,000 in grants to 11 colleges and universities and two nonprofit organizations. Seventy-one organizations applied for the competitive 2009 Help America Vote College Program. Salish Kootenai College is Montana's only grant recipient.

http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/forward-montana-foundation-takes-voter-registration-drive-statewide/article_64e48a02-7ad6-11e1-abbf-0019bb2963f4.html

Forward Montana Foundation takes voter registration drive statewide

March 30, 2012 8:30 pm • [By KEILA SZPALLER of the Missoulian](#)

[\(0\) Comments](#)

This time, the “Pink Bunnies” will be hopping all around Montana.

Since 2007, Forward Montana Foundation has put its crew in pink bunny suits to register people to vote.

This year, the organization focused on getting youth involved in politics is taking its bunnies statewide for a bigger-than-ever voter registration drive.

“The largest drive we’ve ever done was 4,500 in 2008, so this is twice the size we’ve ever done before and the largest in the state,” said Andrea Marcoccio, chief executive officer. “There’s no other entity doing such a large voter registration drive.”

In a news release Friday, Forward Montana also announced recent hires: Tracy Cosgrove as chief operating officer and Kayje Booker as voter registration coordinator. Forward Montana works with many volunteers, and it currently has 4.5 staff members, a figure Marcoccio estimated was a high for the organization the last couple years.

The reason the pink bunny campaign is going statewide is the importance of the 2012 election. Montanans will help select a president, and they will vote for a U.S. senator, a U.S. representative, Montana Public Service commissioners, and many state legislators.

Marcoccio said registering another 10,000 young voters would increase by an estimated 12 percent the number of active voters in Montana who are 18 to 29 years old. It’s a hefty amount.

“Ten thousand new voters can change the game,” Marcoccio said. “And really, from the voter registration point of view, it’s that we want a bigger portion of the electorate to be young (than is young now).”

Forward Montana’s mission includes mobilizing – and electing – young citizens. The pink bunnies are “hard to miss,” an entertaining eye-catcher.

So far, with the help of 12 interns, staff and pink bunny volunteers, Forward Montana has registered 3,144 voters. In April, the pink bunnies will go on a campus tour of the University of Montana-Western in Dillon; Montana Tech in Butte; Montana State University in Bozeman; Carroll College in Helena; Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell; and the University of Montana in Missoula.

The news release noted that a second round reaching Native American campuses is slated for the month of May.

“It’s a lot of young people doing a lot of good work wearing bunny suits,” Marcoccio said.

In the news release, Forward Montana shared statements from its new staff members.

Cosgrove takes the role of chief operating officer after serving on the board of directors: “As a longtime supporter of Forward Montana, I couldn’t be happier to ‘officially’ join the family. Not every COO gets to be surrounded by 15 college-aged interns who want to change the world.”

Booker, Forward Montana’s first voter registration coordinator, “will head up the army of Pink Bunnies.”

From Helena, Booker said everyone knows it’s going to be important to get young people to the polls in 2012: “I cannot wait to pick up my clipboard, put on my bunny ears and start registering young Montanans to vote.”

Reporter Keila Szpaller can be reached at @KeilaSzpaller, 523-5262, keila.szpaller@missoulian.com or on MissoulaRedTape.com.