

Exhibit A

Missoulian Article



GOP promises more voter challenges

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By *MIKE DENNISON of the Missoulian State Bureau*

HELENA - A state Republican Party official said Friday the party plans to expand its challenge of registered Montana voters who have changed their addresses, beyond the 6,000 voters challenged in six counties this week.

“These counties are the beginning, not the end,” said Jake Eaton, executive director for the party. “We're looking at this across the state.”

Meanwhile, state Democrats and the presidential campaign of Barack Obama are exploring possible legal action to block the challenges, an Obama spokesman said late Friday.

“These challenges are a transparent attempt by the Republican Party to suppress voter turnout by confusing and scaring voters,” said Caleb Weaver. “We believe they're going to be unsuccessful, and we're working to ensure that every Montanans' right to vote is protected.”

Groups advocating for younger voters, newly registered voters and voting rights also are reacting to the challenges, generally denouncing the Republican Party's effort and saying they'll do what they can to counter it.

For example, a co-director of Montana Women Vote, a statewide coalition that has helped 10,000 low-income women register to vote since 2004, said it will be matching up the challenge list with their registrants and helping them respond if they're challenged.

“We're really worried that, for people who are unlikely voters or who haven't been voting for long, this is just adding doubt and confusion, and adding another hurdle for them,” said Alysha Goheen Jannotta of Missoula.

Voters who are challenged likely will receive a letter from the county, asking them to verify their current address with a notarized statement. They don't necessarily have to answer the letter (see related story).

Eaton and another GOP staffer filed the challenges earlier this week in six Montana counties: Missoula, Lewis and Clark, Silver Bow, Deer Lodge, Glacier and Hill.

All six counties are Democratic strongholds.

The challenged voters have changed their mailing address since registering. Eaton said party staffers cross-referenced the U.S. Postal Service's change of address registry with the statewide voter database.

Eaton said the party chose to file challenges in the counties where the most discrepancies occurred, and didn't target Democratic counties.

“This is about making sure everyone is properly registered,” he said, and preventing voter fraud.

By next week, the party expects to challenge voters in other counties, he said. Eaton declined to say which counties are next on the list.

Eaton said the party decided to look at the voter lists after learning of comments made by Democratic Gov. Brian Schweitzer in July, when he suggested in a Philadelphia speech that he had tried to influence the outcome of the 2006 U.S. Senate election in Montana on Election Day.

Schweitzer later said he was joking and apologized. His comments had nothing to do with voter registration or voter fraud.

The Republican Party declined to release a list of challenged voters. However, Forward Montana, a Missoula-based group that attempts to mobilize younger voters, obtained a list of those challenged in Missoula County.

About half of the challenged voters are under 30 years old, the group said.

The list also included Kevin Furey, a former Democratic state representative and Army Reserve officer who has been activated for duty in the Middle East.

Furey, reached while visiting his grandmother in Chicago before he deploys to Kuwait, said Friday he had forwarded his mail from his Helena address to his parents in Missoula County. He is registered to vote at his Helena address.

Furey said the challenge may affect many people in the military, and that it's "really egregious" if the challenges end up preventing members of the military from voting.

"It is ironic that at the same time I am about to return to Iraq to help build a democracy, that my own right to vote is being challenged at home for partisan purposes," he said in a statement released earlier. "These challenges are a blatant and offensive attempt to suppress the rights of voters."

Eaton said late Friday that he withdrew the challenge to Furey after learning about it from a reporter.

Matt Singer, the head of Forward Montana, noted that he, too, is on the list of challenged voters.

"This list of challenged voters is ridiculous," he said.

Jon Greenbaum, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Voting Rights Project in New York, said using the Postal Service change-of-address list without any supporting evidence is not a legitimate grounds for challenging a voter.

Bowen Greenwood, spokesman for the Montana secretary of state, said it's the first time Montana has seen a mass challenge of voters.

The secretary of state's office, which oversees elections, is advising county officials to resolve challenges in the favor of the voter, unless there is additional evidence that the address is not legitimate, he said.

Greenbaum said the Montana Republican Party's voter-challenge scheme appears to be the first of its type nationally. In the past, vote-challengers have sent out mailings, and when the mail comes back marked "undeliverable," those voters are challenged, he said. Courts have rejected that method, he added.

Matthew Segal, executive director of the Student Association for Voter Empowerment, said this method,

known as “caging,” often is targeted at students and other blocs of voters who move frequently.

Weaver, of the Obama campaign, said it's no coincidence that the Republican Party's effort is targeting newly registered and younger voters, who are likely Obama supporters.

Eaton said the effort isn't targeting anyone, and that it's following state law that allows anyone to challenge an elector for not registering according to the law.

What you can do if your voter registration is challenged

HELENA - If you're one of the 6,000 registered Montana voters formally challenged this week by state Republican Party operatives, you may be getting a letter from the county election office, asking you to respond.

The letter will contain a voter registration form and a challenge form, known as an “affidavit of challenged elector.”

Here are your options for preserving your right to vote:

If you consider your voter registration address still to be your permanent residence and plan to vote in that precinct, you can ignore the letter and just show up to vote on Nov. 4, with a proof of ID.

If you already have an absentee ballot, you can just send it in.

If you consider your voter registration address still to be your permanent residence and plan to vote in that precinct, you also can confirm this fact by filling out the challenge form and returning it to the county election office.

Your signature on the form must be notarized, which can be done at a county courthouse.

Failing to return the affidavit won't jeopardize your right to vote in most cases. However, the secretary of state's office is recommending that you fill out the challenge affidavit, with a notarized signature, to foreclose any further challenges.

“It's better for everyone if you return the affidavit,” said Bowen Greenwood, spokesman for the secretary of state. “That puts the lid on it.”

If you have moved to a new address since you registered to vote and still live within the same county, you can go to your old precinct and vote one time. However, if you choose this option, you should send in the signed and notarized challenge form indicating your new address.

If you have moved to a new address outside the county where you originally registered, you can go to your county election office and re-register at your new address. Fill out the voter registration card in the letter and return it to the county election office where you live. A ballot will be provided at the office.

If you have any questions, you should call your county election office. A list of offices is at sos.mt.gov/ELB/forms/elections/electionadministrators.pdf.