

## A preview of Election Day from 418 days away

Filing day is the first chance for prospective candidates to get their name on the ballot. Here's how key races across the state look today.

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To most Oregonians, September 14th was a completely ordinary Thursday. For the politically enamored, it has been circled on calendars for months. It was the first day for candidates to file to appear on the May 2024 primary election ballot.

Some—but certainly not all—incumbents filed for re-election. Another handful of candidates have already filed separate paperwork to raise money via their political action committees (PACs), but won't file paperwork to appear on the ballot for weeks or even months from now.

A handful of incumbents are still discussing with key advisors or family members whether they want to pursue re-election. On both sides of the aisle, a bid for higher office from an incumbent lawmaker has consequences that ripple down ballot, while a bid for re-election means not having to buy new lawn signs.

Here's a look at some notable races that have developed in the last few weeks.

**The Democratic primary for Secretary of State.** Term-limited Treasurer Tobias Read has officially launched his campaign for Secretary of State. He is joined in the race by State Senator James Manning (D-Eugene). Most folks believe Read, who ran for governor in 2022, has the advantage. His recent race means a fresher, bigger fundraising list, higher name ID, and potentially better access to talented campaign staff. Manning would be the first black Secretary of State, though he hasn't run statewide before and is still newer to politics than Read who has a decade head start. Big special interests can tip those scales but that picture is still unclear. Right now it doesn't look like the Fagan, Hass, McLeod Skinner primary from 2020.

**The bid to replace term-limited Tobias Read.** Senator Elizabeth Steiner (D-Portland) is looking to make the jump from co-chairing the powerful Ways and Means committee to running the Oregon Treasury. Steiner is currently the favorite to win the primary and the general. There's no filed opposition, though Republican perennial candidate Jeff Gudman is rumored to be seeking the Democratic nomination this time. Steiner is mid term so let's look at...

**The Senate appointment Treasurer Steiner would trigger (if she wins).** Good news for the older Senate, they won't be without a doctor. Rep. Lisa Reynolds and Rep. Maxine Dexter are both MDs and are the heavy favorites to get the post. Dexter technically has seniority, being appointed in the summer of 2020 to replace Rep. Mitch Greenlick who died in office. Reynolds won election later that November and took office in January 2021. This makes for an interesting (read politically messy) appointment. Steiner would likely resign soon after her victory in November 2024 to ensure the eventually appointee can get settled for for the 2025 session.

**Senate incumbents who don't need to wait for Measure 113.** David Brock Smith (R), Fred Girod (R), and Kathleen Taylor (D) all filed and so far don't have challengers. All sit in safe seats and would handily win re-election unless circumstances change significantly.

**Incumbents with a backup plan.** Voters in Senate District 28 will be faced with a unique situation. If measure 113 is upheld they can vote for D. Linthicum (R-Beatty)—if it's overturned, they will instead get to vote for D. Linthicum. Incumbent Dennis was joined on filing day by his wife and chief of staff, Diane, who filed as an apparent insurance policy for an adverse ruling on Measure 113 for the Republicans.

**Meet the new party same as the old party.** Senator Brian Boquist will need to wait for a verdict on Measure 113 to see if he can officially run, but his filing came with a fascinating nugget. Boquist has rejoined the Republican party. If 113 is upheld this won't have an impact, but it could play a role in the 2024 short session.

**A Republican leader who isn't taking no for an answer.** Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp (full disclosure: Tim Knopp is my dad and I'm the Chief of Staff for SD 27, working out of the Senate Republican Office) filed and shared photos of his trip to the state elections office. The Secretary of State has already said she will reject the filing (it's currently listed as pending). Knopp is making it clear he will seek re-election in the event that a challenge to Measure 113 that he's leading in the courts results in a more Republican-friendly interpretation of the ballot measure.

**An open seat in open country.** Bill Hansell (R-Athena) announced early in the 2023 session he wouldn't saddle up for another political rodeo. This open seat has some big local names interested. Wallowa County Commissioner Todd Nash, former Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty, and Hermiston Mayor Dave Drotzmann are all making a play for this seat. It's a bit of anomaly that neither state representative from this area took the opportunity for a promotion (some chamber-loyal State Representatives would call it a demotion).

**Poorly financed Republican challengers.** Southern Oregon is always cantankerous and it remains that way as two-time incumbent Lily Morgan (R) looks to hold her seat against a challenge from Grants Pass City Councilor Dwayne Yunker. Drew Layda is taking an inter party crack at scandal-weakened Brian Stout (R) in HD 31. Stout routed Layda in the 2022 primary, but probably won't be able to do that again. Both challengers appear to be trying to get to the right of the incumbents here, but neither appear backed by strong endorsements or cash at the moment.

**Most watched primary.** To the surprise of most Republicans (and even some Democrats), freshman Rep. Charlie Conrad (R) backed HB 2002. Voting for an abortion and transgender omnibus bill primarily written by Democrats, but amended by Senate Republicans, was a politically risky move. He drew an immediate rebuke from Oregon Right to Life who is backing Darin Harbick. He will be a problem for Conrad. Harbick is a business owner (i.e. self-financer) who just got 30% of the vote statewide in the Republican primary for U.S. Senate. He also has better consultants. If you're asking "do Republican still care about social issues?" you haven't been paying attention. The best

Conrad can hope for is Harbick focuses too much on the HB 2002 vote and that voters who favor other issues check the box for him.

**Majority makers.** Union organizer Lesly Munoz (D) filed to take on Tracy Cramer (R) in the freshly flipped HD 22. Dueling narratives here as Democrats claim low turnout and a bad candidate cost them this seat in 2022. Republicans counter with the possible change in voting behavior by Hispanic voters and conservative wins in Woodburn school board elections. HD 52 is also often targeted by both parties. Republican Jeff Helfrich looks to retain this GOP gain from Democrat Nick Walden

**House incumbents with easy paths to victory.** Court Boice (R), Boomer Wright (R), Jami Cate (R), Rick Lewis (R), Tom Anderson (D)

Ben Bowman (D)

Ken Helm (D), Susan McLain (D), Nathan Sosa (D), E. Werner Reschke (R), Emily McIntire (R), and Mark Owens (R).