

Front Page News

Election turnout currently 14.2% in Josephine County, 9.2% in Jackson County

By Lisa Dunlap of the Daily Courier

A little more than 14% of registered voters in Josephine County had turned in their ballots by Tuesday, a week ahead of the May 16 special election.

In Jackson County, 9.2% of ballots had been turned in, according to the county clerk's office in Medford.

The election will decide the makeup of school boards and other so-called "special districts" in the area, including library boards, school boards, fire districts and Rogue Community College's Board of Education.

A report issued Tuesday by Josephine County Clerk Rhiannon Henkels showed that 9,849 ballots have been received to date, with 9,546 accepted. Submitted ballots equal about 14.2% of the county's 69,606 registered voters, while accepted ballots represent about 13.7% of voters.

Ballots not yet accepted could be unsigned or with signatures that have not yet been resolved, according to Henkels in an email forwarded by Josephine County Public Information Officer Jason Roberts.

Henkel's comments indicated that the results so far are similar to those held for special districts in prior years.

"This is typical for a Special Districts election," Henkels said in the email. "I am unable to speculate as to why voters have yet to participate or are waiting until Election Day gets closer. In the past, voters have notified my office that groups had been encouraging voters to hold on to their ballots until Election Day; however, I have not had any reports from voters of any of that happening this election."

According to the email, while turnout is lower compared to other elections, it is keeping pace with voting in the 2021 special districts election. When that election concluded, total voter turnout was 33.4%, according to the clerk's office. That year 22,981 people voted out of 68,877 registered.

Jackson County Clerk Christine Walker this morning said 14,685 ballots had been received by her office.

Ballots must be postmarked or dropped off by Election Day and received by the clerk's office no later than May 23, according to Henkels and the voters' pamphlet.

Although some area residents have appeared at public meetings expressing concerns about voting security, Henkels said that Josephine County's processes are transparent. She wrote that all election processes involving the election board workers are livestreamed on the county website, as was the public certification test of the tabulating machines conducted Tuesday morning.

She referred other questions about voting security to the "Elections Integrity" section of the Oregon secretary of state's website, sos.oregon.gov.

Reach reporter Lisa Dunlap at 541-474-3726 or ldunlap@thedailycourier.com.

