



YOU, THE INFORMED VOTER, ARE THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST ATTACKS ON OUR DEMOCRACY.

By Steve Trout

Steve Trout is the director of the Oregon Elections Division of the Secretary of State. The Elections Division oversees state elections, ensuring that voting reflects the will of the people.

Welcome to 2020! You may be aware we have a major election coming up this year.

In Oregon, elections happen all the time. But every four years — with high-profile posts like the President of the United States up for grabs — people collectively turn their attention to election systems.

The security of these systems is an important topic and one that often seems to grab the most attention. But did you know that misinformation is actually the biggest threat to elections?

That's why the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office is working hard to provide more frequent information. Our goal is to educate voters and combat misinformation about elections so that Oregon voters feel confident their vote will be counted.

Election misinformation can be anything from rumors to misleading photos to more sinister campaigns with the goal of suppressing voter turnout. Misinformation can influence your thinking about a political campaign or outright lie to you about the status of your voter information. And it can be found from a diverse array of sources — social media, email lists, text message chains, even mailers.

With unlimited sources of information at our disposal, it can be challenging to find information that is accurate and trustworthy. Fortunately, there are some simple questions you can ask yourself to help identify misinformation:

Is there any data or evidence presented to support the information?

Does this information seem designed to push my political buttons?

Is there something about this information that doesn't seem right or too bizarre to be true?

Who is sharing this information?

Does this individual or group have an agenda?

One particular risk to voters comes from groups — some well-intentioned, others not — with websites offering to register you to vote or offering other election information. The safest website to register and get official election information is that of the Oregon Elections Division: OregonVotes.gov.

There, you'll find official information about all Oregon elections, as well as answers to most of your questions about elections. You can register to vote, check your registration status, check or change your political party, find an official ballot dropbox, track your ballot, see who is running for office, and see who is giving them money. You can also learn about election processes, see elections laws, and historical data.

We're proud that Oregonians have confidence in our voting system. In 2019, we conducted a poll that found Oregonians overwhelmingly have a positive experience with our vote-by-mail system. Only 3% said they had problems marking or completing their ballots and only 4% had problems receiving their ballot.

You, the informed voter, are the best defense we have against attacks on our democracy. Don't be fooled by misinformation. Know the official source — OregonVotes.gov — and remember that Oregon elections have never been more accurate or secure. You can be confident your vote counts.