

## Analysis

### Item 9: Secretary of State

#### Election Office Pandemic Expenses

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**Analyst:** Steve Bender

**Request:** Acknowledge receipt of a report on the expenditures supported by the Coronavirus Relief Fund monies distributed to the Secretary of State for financial assistance to county election offices and the Elections Division for costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Analysis:** At its meeting on September 25, 2020, the Emergency Board provided \$1,643,396 from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to the Secretary of State (SOS) for financial assistance to county election offices and the Elections Division for costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, with the understanding that the Elections Division would report on the expenditures supported by these funds at the next meeting of the Emergency Board. The funds are restricted to pandemic-related expenses that have not been reimbursed by other federal COVID assistance funds.

In response, the SOS submitted a report on county election office COVID-related expenses that will be reimbursed with the \$1,543,396 of CRF funds the Elections Division is distributing to counties (an additional \$100,000 of CRF monies is being retained to reimburse the COVID-related expenses of the state Elections Division housed within the Secretary of State).

The distribution amounts to counties varies widely. Five counties did not identify any qualifying expenses and will not receive distributions. For the 28 counties that will receive CRF distributions, the amounts will vary from \$522 (Wasco County) to \$524,979 (Multnomah County). The distribution amounts reflect specific county circumstances and do not necessarily correlate with either the number of registered voters or the number of ballots returned. Costs to conduct the Primary Election totaled \$174,669, while the costs projected for the General Election total \$1,368,727. The Elections Division explains this increase in costs to projections for the number of ballots received in the General Election to increase by at least 70% over the number of ballots received in the Primary.

The Legislative Fiscal Office notes that the use of these funds is restricted by both the Federal CARES Act and by Emergency Board action. The CARES Act restricts CRF expenditures to necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19 during the period from March 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020, and which were not included in the county's budget when the CARES Act was passed. The Emergency Board has further limited the funds to CARES Act-eligible expenditures in county election offices. Counties are not authorized to spend these funds on pandemic-related costs imposed to any other county offices or activities. If it turns out that expenditures meeting these qualifications total less than was projected, the unutilized funds will have to be returned to the Federal government.

The types of eligible expenditures include those for personal protective equipment; other elections equipment and services such as ballot sorters, mail trays, ballot drop boxes, and signature verification software; and general equipment including additional laptops, servers, sneeze guards, and other items. Information on expenditures for each county is included in the agency's request letter.

**Legislative Fiscal Office Recommendation:** The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Emergency Board acknowledge receipt of a report on the expenditures supported by the Coronavirus Relief Fund monies distributed to the Secretary of State for financial assistance to county election offices and the Elections Division for costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.



# OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

BEV CLARNO  
SECRETARY OF STATE

**October 8, 2020**

The Honorable Senator Peter Courtney, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Representative Tina Kotek, Co-Chair  
State Emergency Board  
900 Court Street NE  
H-178 State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Dear Co-Chairpersons:

**Nature of the Request:** Secretary of State's report on approved Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF).

**Agency Action:** During the September 25<sup>th</sup> Emergency Board meeting, \$1,600,000 in CRF monies were approved for the payment of costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic incurred by county election offices and the state Elections Division. We thank you and are grateful for the bipartisan support of the smooth administration of Oregon's elections. As requested, we submit this letter and attached spreadsheet as an update on specific expenditure estimates.

The Elections Division has worked with our county partners to collect estimates on projected pandemic-related expenses. Twenty-eight counties identified such costs that were not reimbursed by other CARES Act funds. Examples include personal protective equipment, plexiglass sneeze guards for public facing counters, additional elections equipment to address reduced staff and social distancing, laptops for remote work, and additional ballot drop boxes that could be placed outside. The identified county election office costs total \$1,543,396 and \$100,000 in similar costs by the Elections Division. As requested, we have attached a spreadsheet with information about the counties' estimated reimbursements.

While Oregon is on a better footing in elections administration than many states because we vote by mail, the pandemic has still created challenges. For example, many indoor ballot drop sites have been closed and counties have had to adapt to ensure access to official drop boxes for both the primary and general election.

Further, many veteran election board workers have been unable to work during the pandemic due to health concerns and lack of social distancing in election work areas, leaving county election offices with less staff. With physical distancing and constraints related to building size and layout, counties have fewer personnel to process ballots.

As a result, counties experienced increased processing times in the May primary for a record turnout of over 1.3 million (47% of eligible registered voters). With that experience and pandemic

restrictions still in place, many counties have further invested, or intend to invest, in election equipment for the November general election when turnout is expected to be over 80% of eligible voters.

With significant gains in the number of registered voters through automatic registration over the last few years, this is again expected to be a record number of ballots to process this November in a Presidential election year. These additional equipment funding requests make the counties' requests much more heavily weighted to the general election and will facilitate the continued smooth processing and timely reporting Oregonians have come to expect for our vote by mail elections.

Each county's experience is unique and some counties have sourced protective equipment from other sources or do not need as much equipment or facility updates, depending on their work spaces size, layout, and overall election processes.

We also remain committed to working with the counties as they apply for reimbursements and ensure they confirm that costs have not been reimbursed by other CARES Act monies.

**Action Requested:** We again thank you for your support of Oregon elections and request you accept this report. We look forward to being a resource for you and the Legislative Fiscal Office staff as any additional questions arise and throughout this reimbursement process.

**Legislation Affected:** None

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bev Clarno".

Bev Clarno  
Secretary of State

COVID ONLY

COVID EXPENSE INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY THE COUNTIES

County	COVID-Related Expenses Incurred Primary Election	Gen'l Description	COVID-Related Expenses Expected General Election	General Description	Total for the County(ies)
Baker	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Benton	\$ 416.07	Sneeze guards; PPE;	\$ 12,258.29	Sneeze guards; PPE; face shields; letter opener; ballot boxes	\$ 12,674.36
Clackamas	\$ 1,581.75	PPE; Plexiglass	\$ 122,500.00	PPE; Verity hardware upgrade; ASV	\$ 124,081.75
Clatsop	\$ -	N/A	\$ 67,670.00	Ballot sorter; drop boxes	\$ 67,670.00
Columbia	\$ 750.00	PPE and Plexiglass	\$ 4,400.00	PPE and drop boxes	\$ 5,150.00
Coos	\$ 2,304.71	PPE; other office equipment;	\$ 10,350.52	PPE; signs; sneeze guards; ballot boxes; fire suppression	\$ 12,655.23
Crook	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Curry	\$ 593.44	PPE; office equipment	\$ 56,919.00	Ballot sorter; ballot boxes	\$ 57,512.44
Deschutes	\$ 2,667.67	Drop boxes; mailbox; signs; security; PPE	\$ 2,091.61	Stanchions; laptop; PPE	\$ 4,759.28
Douglas	\$ 223.08	Plexiglas; PPE	\$ 66,796.97	Ballot sorter; ballot boxes; face shields	\$ 67,020.05
Gilliam	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Grant	\$ -	N/A	\$ 25,650.00	Security entrance, cameras, backup server; fire suppression, laptops; security film.	\$ 25,650.00
Harney	\$ 1,000.00	Supplies provided through Emergency Mgt Dept.	\$ -	0	\$ 1,000.00
Hood River	\$ -	N/A	\$ 3,225.00	Ballot box	\$ 3,225.00
Jackson	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Jefferson	\$ 833.94	PPE	\$ 1,328.94	PPE, masks, gloves, sneeze guards, hand sanitizer, air purifier	\$ 2,162.88
Josephine	\$ -	N/A	\$ 800.00	N/A	\$ 800.00
Klamath	\$ 88.53	PPE	\$ 820.00	Plexiglass; sneeze guards	\$ 908.53
Lake	\$ 897.60	Sneeze guards; PPE;	\$ -	N/A	\$ 897.60
Lane	\$ 20,885.00	ASV; sneeze guards	\$ 145,905.00	Workstation guards; customer service counter improvements	\$ 166,790.00
Lincoln	\$ 257.00	PPE	\$ 9,100.00	PPE; laptops	\$ 9,357.00
Linn	\$ 8,118.39	PPE; lights; laptops; Plexiglas; dropbox	\$ 39,057.12	Extractor; observation room; laptops for work offsite	\$ 47,175.51
Malheur	\$ 114.00	Gloves; PPE	\$ 1,252.94	Barriers at the counter;	\$ 1,366.94
Marion	\$ -	N/A	\$ 208,036.00	Ballot dropboxes; mail trays; enhancements to the vote tally system;	\$ 208,036.00
Morrow	\$ -	N/A	\$ 10,900.00	Envelope slitter; fire suppression; webcams; security door; vinyl task chairs; Plexiglas sheets;	\$ 10,900.00
Multnomah	\$ 122,052.81	Hardware, PPE, extra services, materials	\$ 402,926.00	Extraction desk; Facilities changes; Voter Education; Image Scanner	\$ 524,978.81
Polk	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Sherman	\$ 3,846.16	Install Plexiglas and partitions; baskets; envelopes	\$ 277.74	Envelope opener;	\$ 4,123.90
Tillamook	\$ -	N/A	\$ 50,000.00	Ballot sorter;	\$ 50,000.00
Umatilla	\$ 286.34	PPE, glass shields	\$ 71,839.30	Ballot sorter; software; laptop; lights and outlets	\$ 72,125.64
Union	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Wallowa	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Wasco	\$ -	N/A	\$ 522.34	PPE; signs;	\$ 522.34
Washington	\$ 1,249.28	PPE	\$ 18,074.70	PPE; laptops; other office materials	\$ 19,323.98
Wheeler	\$ -	N/A	\$ -	N/A	\$ -
Yamhill	\$ 6,502.73	PPE; sanitation; office equipment; computer monitors	\$ 36,025.86	Ballot extractor; PPE; office equipment	\$ 42,528.59
<b>Subtotals:</b>	<b>\$ 174,668.50</b>		<b>\$ 1,368,727.33</b>		<b>\$ 1,543,395.83</b>