

Voter turnout better than expected in EDC

By Susan Wood

About one-third of the registered voters in El Dorado County cast a ballot in Tuesday's primary – and that's considered good.

That's the general assessment leading into the final results for El Dorado County elections from a man who has spent much of his government career watching and analyzing them.

In the topsy-turvy world of elections, longtime county Registrar Bill Schultz has seen it all. He anticipated last week that the June 5 primary might see only a 17 percent voter turnout, however he said people showed up in droves on election day. Preliminary estimates are the turnout will be closer to 33 percent. There are 115,431 registered voters in El Dorado County.

El Dorado traditionally brings out more registered voters to the ballot box in comparison to other counties.

"If you would've asked me a week ago, I'd say we'd probably have a low turnout – not as low as other counties – but low. But let me tell ya, it's been jam-packed all afternoon. A lot of younger people. That's good to see," Schultz told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It's going to be interesting."

Termed the "jungle primary," the two top vote-getters in a race advance no matter what party they fall in. That is assuming no one garnered 50 percent plus one. The change is intended to make the system more equitable.

"Every time there's a gubernatorial race, everyone wants to get their name on the ballot. It's bragging rights I guess,"

Schultz said.

As a county, more than 78 percent of registered voters in El Dorado County opted for a mail-in ballot. An elections worker at Lake Tahoe Airport late Tuesday afternoon indicated there was less voter traffic than usual.

Mail-in ballots have become increasingly popular over the last decade. They've also posed as an early indicator to final results.

New this year in California's system is the opportunity to register right up to election day. However, those are considered conditional ballots.

During a primary or general election, the day of civic duty brings out its share of gaffes and unusual events. This primary witnessed El Dorado's neighboring Amador County run out of ballots because turnout ended up much greater than expected. According to the *Ledger Dispatch* newspaper, at least five polling places had none by 3pm, and voters had to be turned away.

Problems existed in large counties as well. Los Angeles County experienced widespread confusion when printing errors left many voters off the rosters.