

Opinion

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

'Bitter partisan politics' made up by 1-63 campaign

To the Editor:

What is "Bitter Partisan Politics?"

I thought it amusing that one letter writer is urging you to vote yes on I-63 in order to keep "Bitter Partisan Politics" out of Baker County Government, and another mentions "Bitter Politics." Sounds like they have the same coach directing the play.

I've lived here all my life and have yet to witness this so-called "Bitter Partisan Politics" in local elections.

Ask yourself why you registered as a Republican. Was it because your "core values" lined up with other Republicans? Why did you register as a Democrat? It was because you believed in the Democrats' philosophy or "core values" Who do you want making decisions for the County? Someone who shares the same values with you, or someone who has a different idea about what's good for you? The non-partisan elective County offices that we have must follow the laws that govern that particular office. They don't make the same type decisions that our County Commissioners have to make. Decisions that affect us for years.

I've always voted for the person who I thought would do the best job. Most of the time it is the person who shares the same core values.

A person running for office can say anything, make any claim, promise anything, and spend lots of money to get elected. If you have to guess at their "core values," you're buying a pig in a poke. If a candidate has been vetted by his local Central Committee, you can rest assured that he has the same "core values" that you look for.

If you want single party politics locally, why do you belong to a local Republican or Democrat Central Committee. Why not get out and start your own Single Party political Central Committee?

One party politics is akin to one world government.

Vote NO on measure 1-63. Thank you.

Terry Speelman
Baker City

Baker's politics are bitter

To the Editor:

I support Measure 1-63. I want bitter partisan politics out of the management of Baker County government.

In speaking with many Baker County citizens, I am dismayed about the misinformation that has been circulated regarding Measure 1-63. Local nonpartisan elections do not hide a local candidate's core values. In fact, core values are not always evident simply by party affiliation. It is up to you, the voter, to learn about the candidate. Party registration does not always tell you about the person.

The People over Politics Committee that support this bill are not a far left group of liberals. They are Republicans, Democrats and non-affiliated persons, of all ages, working hard and working together.

I have heard a lot about Commission resignations.

Today, and under Measure 1-63, if one commissioner resigns, the two remaining commissioners appoint the replacement.

Under Measure 1-63, all interested candidates may submit their name for consideration. Candidates' names are public. Much like the recent appointment process of the Baker County Sheriff, public participation will be encouraged. No closed meetings. No secret votes. The selection is transparent. Baker County Commissioners will continue to appoint someone to fill a single vacant post until an election is held.

When two County Commissioners resign at the same time, there is no change in the current process. ORS 236.225 treats partisan and nonpartisan appointments in the same way.

On June 19, 1986, two commissioners, Rod McCullough (D) and Ben Dunleavy (R), submitted letters of resignation effective July 1. On June 26, Mr. McCullough agreed to stay until a replacement was appointed. Mr. Urey, a Democrat, was appointed. Commissioner McCullough resigned on July 16. Commissioner Urey and Judge Smith appointed Mr. Leonard, a Republican. At no time did the governor name a replacement. At no time were there two vacancies.

We do not lose control with this Measure 1-63. We vote. We only lose bitter partisan politics.

It's time to make our County Commission positions nonpartisan. Let all Baker County voters have a voice that matters.

Vote yes on Measure 1-63. Thank you.

Bob McKim
Baker City

Feds, not States, should manage lands

To the Editor:

Much has been said recently in the West about local control of and "taking back" our public lands.

Taking them back from whom? The public lands never "belonged" to the States ... these lands are what was left after the U.S. government made land available for, among other things, home-steading, road-building, selections by the states as each came into the Union, and constructing railroads, welding our young country together.

The United States acquired its land base primarily through conquest, purchase, and treaty. The Constitution provides the authority for the Feds to own and manage public lands, and the Supreme Court has long-recognized this authority.

Managing public lands is complex. Transferring them will not simplify these issues, and folks who think so are either deluding themselves or are woefully uneducated about them.

Utah has been cited as an example of how to implement this ill-advised scheme. But the efforts of the legislature and the governor fly in the face of the state attorney general's legal advice, case law, the economic analysis from the University of Utah requested by the legislature, and common sense.

Imagine Oregon or Baker County trying to manage these public lands. Fire, grazing, wildlife, recreation, logging/timber management, water quality, energy and mining, access and transportation, wilderness, rights-of-way, public safety, and many other uses would have to be managed. How would this be paid for? Proponents say we could simply cut more timber, mine more minerals, lease more oil and gas and coal, sell more land, charge more for grazing and recreational uses, and cut administrative costs. A simple answer to a complex problem. And the wrong answer.

We have a system of representative government in this country. Let's get over ourselves and get to work cooperating and coordinating with the agencies and each other to address real issues, not wasting our time and money on half-baked, poorly thought-out strategies that already have proven ineffective and not based in law or logic.

Dave Hunsaker
Baker City

1-63 one huge mistake

To the Editor:

Jefferson County, where I live, moved to the nonpartisan election of county commissioners a few years ago. Why people chose to try to fix something that was not broken, I do not know. I believe the more we know about how a person will vote and if he/she will vote in accordance with their political philosophy is important. Whether Democrat, Republican, or Independent, each Political Party has the ability to nominate candidates for the primary election. It is in the primary where political parties choose the person(s) they believe will best represent their beliefs. It is in the general election where the differences among the political philosophies should become relevant to the voters.

In the recent election in Jefferson County, we had two individuals running for one county commission position. One, although a Democrat, never expressed his true political leaning. In forums, he most often espoused conservative positions on the issues when he knew the audience was conservative. Yet everyone who knew him knew these were neither his positions nor how he would have voted had he been elected. It is easier to hide one's true beliefs when partisan political views are not considered.

The Baker City Herald recently said the Republican Party didn't open the primary. Question: Did the Democrat Party? Rather than nonpartisan positions, the various political parties need to field candidates so they too will have representation in the general election. It is their responsibility. The non-partisan election for any position that makes policy that affects the citizens is akin to Milk Toast!

The unaffiliated voters make that choice. They too have every opportunity to be a member of a political party. That is how it works in America.

I urge the citizens of Baker County to Vote no on Measure 1-63. Why change a system that works for one that has shown to cause problems in other counties of this State? You will not regret saying no to Measure 1-63.

Kate Adams,
Oregon GOP CD2 Chair
Jefferson County

— GUEST OPINION —

Nonpartisan positions of no benefit to Baker County

By Bill Currier
Special to The Baker County Press



Submitted Photo

Bill Currier is Chair of the Oregon Republican Party and Mayor of Adair Village, Oregon.

Voters in Baker County are faced with an interesting choice in the upcoming election.

They can choose to continue selecting their county commissioners with full knowledge of the candidate's party affiliation, known as partisan elections, or they can change the election system to a non-partisan method where that information is not disclosed to the voter on the ballot.

Proponents of Measure 1-63 (non-partisan elections) tend to argue that political parties exert too much influence in partisan elections and therefore elections should be non-partisan. This argument clearly relies on the notion that partisan elections are inherently undesirable. Before we get caught up in that tempting thought, we should examine the history and purpose of partisan politics.

The word partisan originally meant like-minded, and was applied to groups of people who shared common values or beliefs —what we call political parties today. However, lately, the word partisan has taken on a negative connotation, being applied to those who strongly follow a certain ideology without regard to logic. The proponents of Measure 1-63 are relying on that connotation.

However, at election time, partisan information about values and beliefs is precisely what voters do need to know about a commissioner candidate. Without this information elections tend to devolve into contests about who has the most money or who has the most name recognition. Voters benefit by knowing what set of values and beliefs the candidate is committed to upholding.

Without partisan information on a given commissioner candidate voters are more likely to rely on unreliable secondary cues, such as the ethnicity of the candidate's name, or their apparent popularity. Obviously, these cues do not help voters choose the best possible candidate. Likewise, without party affiliation, candidates are not accountable to any particular set of values or beliefs.

Without a commitment to a set of values or beliefs while campaigning a candidate is less likely to follow a predictable course of action once elected. This is a major source of

voter frustration—candidates who do not perform as the voter could have reasonably expected. This disenfranchisement is magnified by non-partisan elections because candidates are not accountable to a set of values and beliefs.

Put another way, without partisan information about commissioner candidates, elections become less about the issues and more about the non-performance related aspects of a candidate. Is this the basis of commissioner selection that Baker County voters really want to encourage? Don't we want to know what the candidate stands for, and what they are willing to commit to, in a tangible way?

Another unfortunate side effect of non-partisan elections is that they result in lower voter turnout—about 10 percent lower on average. This is due to voters having less confidence in their choice because they are lacking useful information about the candidate's value and beliefs. Partisan information about candidates actually causes voters to become more involved in the political process of choosing candidates.

In the last 25 years there has been a slight increase in non-partisan county elections across the U.S. Oregon has seen a number of counties move to non-partisan elections. However, the data shows that this trend has resulted in decreased voter confidence in candidate selection, a decrease in voter turnout, and an increase in voter frustration with candidates who do not perform as expected once elected.

Non-partisan elections do not inherently favor one party or another. Nationwide statistics show that counties utilizing the non-partisan election method can be either Republican or Democrat controlled. However, it is clear that the performance of elected officials is less predictable in non-partisan races. In order to choose wisely voters need to know more information about their candidates, not less.

— CONTACT US —

The Baker County Press

PO Box 567
Baker City, Ore. 97814

Open Monday-Thursday for calls
9 AM - 4 PM
Open 24/7 for emails
Office location: TBA

Phone: 541.519.0572

TheBakerCountyPress.com

Kerry McQuisten, Publisher
Editor@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Wendee Morrissey, Advertising and Sales
Wendee@TheBakerCountyPress.com

David Conn, Advertising and Sales
David@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Published weekly every Friday.
Subscription rates per year are \$29.95 all areas,
e-mail delivery. \$39.95 print issue, home delivery,
Baker City city limits only. \$49.95 print issue,
mail delivery, outside Baker City city limits only.
Payment in advance.

A division of
Black Lyon Publishing, LLC

Copyright © 2014

YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

President Barack Obama

202.456.1414

202.456.2461 fax

Whitehouse.gov/contact

US Sen. Jeff Merkley

503.326.3386

503.326.2900 fax

Merkley.Senate.gov

US Sen. Ron Wyden

541.962.7691

Wyden.Senate.gov

US Rep. Greg Walden

541.624.2400

541.624.2402 fax

Walden.House.gov

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown

503.378.3111

Governor.Oregon.gov

State Rep. Cliff Bentz

503.986.1460

State Sen. Ted Ferrioli

541.490.6528

Baker County Commissioners Bill Harvey; Mark Bennett; Tim Kerns

541.523.8200

541.523.8201