

Opinion / Local

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Vote no on 1-63

To the Editor:
Please vote NO on measure 1-63. We need to know. We need to know all we can about our candidates for office of Baker County executive branch. We need to know their history, positions, character, and political party. We need to know because all these things help us make a more informed decision when we vote. The founding fathers thought so too. The effort, time and deliberation by these very informed and dedicated men gave us the form of government we have now. It has worked well, certainly better than other countries with their systems. When we read Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison we should be grateful for their effort and thoughtfulness. Please vote NO on measure 1-63.
Remember, knowledge is power. Conversely, lack of knowledge is weakness. Let us not give up our ability to acquire knowledge. Please vote NO on measure 1-63.

Tom Van Diepen
*Baker County Republican
Subcommittee Chair against 1-63
Baker City*

Nonpartisan never works; it also failed in Alaska

To the Editor:
I believe all voters in Baker County should read Keith Trahern's letter from Grants Pass and really think about what jumping in and voting for a change of non-partisan elections can cause; like the people did seventy years ago when they thought they wanted a change, they got it. Now we are going down the tube fast the same way Germany did when the people believed Hitler.

While living in Alaska I was an Election Board Chairman in two different Election Districts, which was 16 years altogether, and I have seen and watched things that were tried and worked but some didn't.

In my training it was understood that the only reason for a Primary Election was for each Party to decide who they wanted to run against the other Party's candidate in the General Election. In the mid 70s the people weren't satisfied how the elections were run so the non-partisan Elections were voted in and then the fun began.

My experiences with non-partisan elections were mainly listening to both Democrat and Republicans alike letting me know how they were going to vote for the other party's weakest candidate in the Primary Election to make sure their candidate won in the General. After the Primary Elections, the people would come to our house and brag how they voted and they were sure that now their candidate would win.

But after a few times they found out that it didn't always turn out as they wanted it to and they sure weren't satisfied, so then the newspapers were loaded with unsatisfied people from both Parties.

The nonpartisan elections were voted back out and it was still that way when I left. Dirty politics doesn't always win!

Marge Brittain
Baker City

SWCD here to serve landowners

To the Editor:
The Baker Valley Soil & Water Conser-

vation District (SWCD) is a local government representing agricultural interests throughout Baker County. SWCD Directors are elected officials and charged with managing local natural resource issues. It has recently been reported that Tim L Kerns Sr., Baker County Commissioner, was involved in an Oregon Government Ethics Commission investigation that involved Baker Valley SWCD. Unfortunately this report is in error. Tim L. Kerns, Sr., is the County Commissioner, Tim A. Kerns, Jr. is an SWCD director that has been elected into his position and served for many years.

In 2010 the Oregon Government Ethics Commission investigated SWCD Director Tim A. Kerns. The Ethics Commission closed this investigation by issuing Mr. Kerns a "letter of education."

The Baker Valley SWCD Board of Directors and staff are proud of our area producers and the conservation work they and the SWCD accomplish together, and we look forward to continuing to serve the landowners of Baker County.

Baker Valley Soil & Water Conservation District
Baker City

1-63 fixes nothing

To the Editor:
In a short time Baker County residents will receive ballots for measure 63, the measure to change the county commissioner position from partisan to nonpartisan.

The chief petitioner for measure 63, Mr. Randy Joseph, feels the current systems is flawed and "needs to be fixed."

I respectfully disagree. Although the partisan system maybe flawed, it is much superior to the nonpartisan system. This last week I read two letters to the editor expressing extreme disappointment from going from partisan to non-partisan system on the election process for the County Commissioner. Ask the residences if Josephine County how "bitter" or how well the nonpartisan system is working out for them!

In 2012 when Commissioner Dr. Carl Stiff, a Republican, became ill and resigned, the replacement process was left up to the Baker County GOP central committee.

The special meeting was attended by the just under 50 GOP members who had a chance to listing and vote for around ten people interested in fulfilling Dr. Stiff's position. Mark Bennett was selected as that replacement. Mr. Bennett has served the needs and interest of Baker County residents very well.

A wise old scholar once said, "No one of us is as smart as the sum of all of us." Or in electing Mark Bennett, fifty people vs. the two remaining County Commissioners, which would happen under the nonpartisan system.

In a nutshell, it sounds like Mr. Joseph appears have a case of "sour grapes" after losing his own bid for commissioner. Going to a non-partisan selecting process for to fix Mr. Joseph's perceived flaws in the current system, is the same as "throwing the baby out with the bath water."

As for me and my household, we are voting no on measure 63.

Arvid Andersen
Baker City

— EDITORIAL —

1-63 proponents see only bitterness

We're acutely aware that with this editorial, we're the only newspaper in Baker County to speak out against nonpartisan initiative 1-63.

We're also aware that we possess the only members of any local editorial board to have personally been through a formal nominating convention to replace a Baker County Commissioner. We don't believe one single soul on the "Yes on 1-63, Baker County People over Politics" committee has experienced one.

We'd like to give our firsthand witnessing of the local representative process that proponents of 1-63 would see destroyed with their feel-good nonpartisan initiative.

When Dr. Carl Stiff resigned the year before last after serving as Commissioner, an opening was created among Baker County's Board of Commissioners. Such an opening happens every few years here, and when it does, the very best of partisan politics unfolds. There is no "bitterness" as 1-63 pushers like to claim. What we experienced was a coming together of entry-level elected officials from all corners of the county to make an important decision for its people. Partisan politics, at the core, were designed to hold a certain patriotic beauty, which we were lucky enough to experience in that moment.

In this case, because Dr. Stiff was Republican, the local Republican Party was called into action. If Dr. Stiff had been Democrat, the same would have happened with that party.

The grassroots level of the party, your Baker County Precinct Committee People—or PCPs, 50 in each party based on our county's population— were notified of the pending nominating convention.

The executive committee for the local Republicans opened its doors for applications from interested citizens who desired consideration for the seat Dr. Stiff vacated.

The applications came in not just from one or two dedicated people, but from more than half a dozen in the end. Calls and questions were received from many, many more than that.

On the evening of the nominating convention, PCPs representing every single corner of the county filtered into the library's meeting room, filling it. A sense of honor, duty and responsibility hung in the air because we all knew that the American process was still working in this decade the way our Founding Fathers had intended so very many decades before us.

The slate of candidates was impressive. These candidates stood and sat through some intense questioning as the group got to know each of them and their ideals

better. Each PCP knew he/she was there to represent the voters in the precinct that had elected him/her, and that duty was taken seriously.

Ballots were cast in a first, second and third place vote per PCP, with PCPs who represented a larger precinct having slightly more "weight" to their vote than, say, a PCP representing the smallest precinct based on the population. The process mirrors the electoral college you may recognize from Presidential elections. We can't reveal the final count, but there wasn't a candidate who didn't receive votes. There also was a wide variety of opinion among the PCPs in the room, but there was certainly no "bitterness" involved, even between PCPs who had different preferences for the next Commissioner.

Experts from the state-level were invited (not required, but invited) to provide a second set of eyes in the balloting process. Counting and witnessing occurred in just as structured an environment as any election has in any County Clerk's office.

In the end, though, the system worked—and it worked beautifully. The top candidates were recommended to the remaining Commissioners for appointment, and then the appointment was made official.

Our new commissioner, which turned out to be Mark Bennett, was selected through one of the most patriotic processes we've ever had the honor to take part in.

This is what 1-63 is attempting to crush. This is what the single-party systems in countries like Cuba, China and Mexico have already crushed.

This is what we hope to preserve for our children and our children's children.

The point is: our system works. And it doesn't just "work." It thrives when people participate in it.

So when 1-63 proponents state that their initiative is a great idea because of all the poor, disenfranchised voters, we call bull. When they state how divisive and divided our county is because of our current system, we know better—because we've seen the process from an involved point of view that 1-63 fans apparently haven't. When they say a single-party system promotes democracy, we'll be quick to point out that America has never been a direct democracy. Never. We're a Representative Republic—a fact 1-63 proponents completely ignore.

The exact and only purpose of a primary election is for each party to identify its strongest candidate and present that candidate to the voters so that they can then make the final decision in the general election. Any voter from any party can vote to participate in that choice.

If the Democrats didn't present a viable candidate in the 2014 primary, it's because they chose not to. It's because that party failed in its duties. It wasn't because they were disenfranchised.

The Republicans presented candidates because that party actively participated in the process. That party fulfilled its duties.

Likewise, if a voter registers non-affiliated, Independent, Constitution, Green, Working Families, Republican or Democrat—that is the individual voter's choice. This is not disenfranchisement. But the driving forces behind 1-63 will do their best to make voters think it is.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

THE NONPARTISAN MOVEMENT ISN'T WHAT THEY'RE TELLING YOU.

1-63 changes Baker County Commissioner positions to nonpartisan. Sounds good? Think again. Here's what 1-63 really does:



• You will KNOW LESS ABOUT CANDIDATES. Their political affiliations will be cloaked.

• We will LOSE MUCH OF OUR REPRESENTATIVE LOCAL CONTROL over the replacement process when Commissioners resign.

• Nonpartisan races historically have LOWER VOTER TURNOUT, not higher, as 1-63 proponents claim.

Find out more: BakerRepublicans.com

Join us in voting no on 1-63!

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| Suzan Jones | Janis Anderson | Karen Hutchinson | Melissa Hamman |
| Keith Jones | George Anderson | Steve Hutchinson | Jim Juhola |
| Arvid Andersen | Bob Chase | Lois Eckley | Esa Murrell |
| Mary Andersen | Joe Johnson | Philip Alford | Craig Monpas |
| Kyle Knight | Wilma Johnson | Barbara Williams | Larry Chase |
| Peggie Longwell | Gary Holland | Elizabeth Becker | Joe Greene |
| Jim Longwell | Gaylon Scarbrough | Claudia Wise | Robin Lawrence |
| Tom Van Diepen | Brian Addison | Dr. Michael Rushton | Connie Courtright |
| Janet Van Diepen | Peggy Vernholm | Sally Scelson | Pat Arriola |
| Kerry McQuisten | Gary Vernholm | Martin Arriola | Wanda Arriola |
| Dave McQuisten | Summer Curry | Bonnie White | Wendee Morrissey |
| Terry McQuisten | Pauline Nicely | John Dollar | John Morrissey |
| Kody Justus | Jerry Shaw | Gene Button | Jerry Brounstein |
| Kent Justus | Sally Shumway | Kurt Lewis | Tork Ballard |
| Heidi Justus | Bill Shumway | Connie Pound Lewis | Wanda Ballard |
| Lorri Speelman | Alisa Anderson | Gaylene Colton Morris | Joe Mann |
| Terry Speelman | Tom Anderson | Jack Myers | Ron Stoaks |
| Patty Trost | Kurtis Anderson | Charles Cree | Dan Mark |
| Rick Trost | Nicholas Anderson | Marty Stroy | Tammy Mercado |
| Roberta Morin | Shelley Jampolsky | David Noble | Martin LaHaug |
| John Morin | Ann Racey | Kristina Johnson | Joshua Michel |
| Chris Dunn | Chris Ransom | Donn Copley | Jarom Hibbert |
| Clodagh Dunn | Denise Ransom | Linda Keister | Thomas Hank |
| Chuck Chase | Carmelita Holland | Shirley Taylor | Tik Moore |
| John Becker | Carole Dyke | Mary Pinkham | Terry Swenson Smith |
| Ramona Creighton | Terry Dyke | Lauri Hoopes | Steve Smith |
| John Creighton | Suzie Dyke | John Hoopes | Charles Stewart |
| Ryan Arriola | Kathy Sherman | Jason Smith | Ken Alexander |
| Angela Arriola | Dave Sherman | Rebecca Smith | Joe Cox |
| Kent Nelson | Dr. Carl Kostol | Jerry Boyd | Eileen Stewart |
| Anita Nelson | Virginia Kostol | Dick Fleming | Jennifer Burton |
| Pam Haney | Michael Chase | Bill Harvey | Rogel Music |
| Jim Haney | Kathryn Grace | Lorrie Harvey | Wallace Shephard |
| Rob Browning | Ken Anderson | Andrea Lucas | Sherrie Shephard |
| Kim Browning | Wayne Dyke | Rusty Little | Fred Koontz |
| Tom Quental | Teresa Dyke | Kerri Little | Esther Koontz |
| Julia Quental | Todd Arriola | Steve Phillips | Kathy Taylor |
| Tom Beaver | Marge Brittain | Sandra Ghormley | Gary Page |
| Richard Winsor | Ed Hardt | Marilyn Spicer | Robert Woolery |
| Jordyn Hellbusch | Don Koontz | Mike Ware | Keith Rogers |
| Peter Ellingson | Jim Iler | Robert Hamman | |
| Gene Reed | Ron Edge | | And many more! |
| Patricia Reed | Brent Morrissey | | |