

# Opinion

## — LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### 1-63 needs to fail

To the Editor:  
A vote of “no” is needed for Baker Initiative 1-63. This measure is just not good for Baker County. It appears to be change for the sake of change – sound familiar?

Fact: Nonpartisan elections consistently have lower voter turnout. **Consistently lower turnout!**

Fact: There is no accountability for nonpartisan offices as they are not tied to a party platform.

Fact: A person’s core beliefs do influence decision-making. To think otherwise is a thinking error.

Fact: Liberal organizations such as the League of Women Voters, League of Conservation Voters and the Nonpartisan League (which was founded by the Socialist Party of America) promote nonpartisan elected officials, as a move to a one party system.

Fact: Currently in the Legislative process, House Bill 3500 will create open primaries if passed.

Fact: County Commissioners are the rule makers for our county. Just like our State & Federal Representatives and Senators, all partisan offices. Other county elected offices such as the Assessor, Sheriff, Clerk, and District Attorney are nonpartisan and these positions carry out laws—they do not make them — this is a huge difference in job duties.

Fact: What bitterness, what rancor? The system works well as it is today. Only ones who express bitterness and keep harping on it, are those who have lost or failed in their elected duties. We are a representative republic, which the libs are trying to whittle away at, with this idea of nonpartisanship, which is the socialist pathway to a one party system.

In 2013 when the Republicans nominated candidates for Dr. Stiff’s position (Republican) there was one person who was upset and apparently bitter because they could not apply for the vacant position. This person was Randy Joseph, the chief petitioner for this nonpartisan measure (1-63). He is a registered Democrat.

So, why would anyone want to know less about their elected County Commissioners? Maybe it’s just the potential or rerun candidates who want the voters to know less....Vote NO on 1-63. It’s just not good for Baker County.

**Suzan Ellis Jones**  
*Chair, Baker County  
Republican Central Committee  
Baker City*

### Nonpartisan system hides candidate values

To the Editor:  
Please don’t give your rights away!  
Vote no on 1-63!

I’m asking for all of our Baker County Republican, Independent, & Democrat voters to not dismantle our historical and cultural voting system. For close to 240 years we have had one of the world’s best governmental structures for selecting our political leaders. This very system has stood the test of time.

When I vote, I always look for someone who is conservative and shows past experiences, beliefs and voting records that align with my core values. I also look for someone who has the leadership capabilities to bring others into this way of understanding.

A partisan primary election is the best way to choose a candidate that best supports our values and also has some accountability to the Political party and their members regarding such. The differences between the major political parties in core beliefs do have impacts on the decisions made by your County Commissioners. Examples of decisions on Climate Change, wind farms and environmental Impact issues are constantly brought forth regarding the Natural Resources in Baker County.

Taking away this opportunity we all lose, all of us as voters, the ability to choose our best representative. Someone else may be making the choice for you and taking away the right that you now have. The System works when all sides

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choose to be a part of it. Don’t change our voting system because you simply don’t choose to use it. Join me in voting NO on 1-63.

**Bill Harvey**  
*Chair, Baker County  
Board of Commissioners  
Haines*

### Nonpartisan commissions doesn’t break good ole boys’ network

To the Editor:  
A popular myth is that the non-partisan elections are the best ones because they don’t have any of the Democrat versus Republican fighting and more people are involved. Better, purer democracy is the premise. That’s a premise that fails of it’s own logical fallacy. Knowing the political leaning of a candidate as expressed by party affiliation is more rather than less. And it’s a bit comical to pretend non-partisan means less contentious and opens the process to more voters.

Is it possible that local elections are more partisan than state and federal elections? The factions in local elections are personal and tend to flow along family lines and friends that create groups based on strong legacy relationships. Enter the “good old boy network.”

There I said it.  
People tend to line up into one of two camps and are very vocal. People outside of the factions are often locked out and are reluctant to engage the powerful alliances. They are also more likely to be turned off by both sides and just don’t want a part of either one. Trying to breach the powerful hold of the camps is not helped by non-partisan elections. Rather, if there are two primary camps those groups will isolate or disenfranchise the “newcomer.”

While it’s a wonderful thought that partisanship will be eliminated it’s also a pipe dream. Imagine the candidate that uses the walk list to determine an approach to gaining petition signatures.

A stop at a Democrat’s house commenting on the good friendship with a prominent Democratic family in town will score emotional points. And when at a Republican’s home, dropping the fact that he usually voted Republican gains loyalty there.

The truth is people do care about partisan issues and political ideology and politicians know this.

Non-partisan elections may seem like a noble enterprise but fail the people. People want to vote for those with values similar to their own. Knowing the party and it’s principles and values gives people certain assumptions that they can work under. Without these assumptions, the voter has to do more work. People usually don’t like to do extra work and stay home rather than making a terrible mistake based on a guess.

Baker County voters have a choice with Measure 1-63 that will appeal to the notion that nonpartisan elections are better and partisan elections are not desirable. While the tenor of an election can excite or turn off people has nothing to do with party affiliations or partisan vs. nonpartisan elections. Good candidates that express their principles and values, incorporate that in their approach at governance and have demonstrated integrity in their community will do more to enhance elections and gain more participation.

Choosing yes on Measure 1-63 will not help Baker County. I recommend a NO vote.

**Ken Taylor**  
*Chair, Crook County  
Republican Central Committee  
Prineville*

### 1-63 is road map to one-party system

To the Editor:  
Ballots are out for the May election. To keep the system which has worked for a very long time, everyone needs to vote no! Everyone who wants to vote, can vote now—but to hear the “yes” crowd, you would think someone is physically stop-

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ping them from voting in every election.

The non-partisan system is the road map to a one-party system. History all over the world shows this—look at Mexico and how well it has worked for them. Here in Oregon, look at Josephine County, and other counties which are currently non-partisan. They are not happy with the system and want to return to the system Baker County has today.

One of the arguments we hear is so everyone can vote in the primary election. Well, currently, in the Oregon Legislature, House Bill 3500, which is still an active bill, will provide open primaries. So why change the partisanship of Baker County Commissioners? Maybe it’s the folks who have run for office and lost who think this change will help their next attempt. Change for the sake of change is not good for Baker County. Join me in voting NO on Baker County Initiative 1-63 when you vote.

**Carole Dyke**  
*Baker City*

### Many reasons for ‘no’ on 1-63

To the Editor:  
Liberal Democrat and Chief Petitioner, Randy Joseph has stated that he thinks the opposition to this county initiative is just objecting to be objecting.

Joseph does not seem to be listening to what the opponents are saying, there are valid reasons for voting no on Measure 1-63.

We like the party system. It is what our country is founded on. It has worked well in Baker County. Why fix it, if it isn’t broke?

- Change is not needed, just for the sake of change. Sound familiar? We see how change, just for the sake of change has transformed America this past seven years.

- Other counties in Oregon have gone the nonpartisan route and they regret it and are making plans to change back to the system that did work. So, is Baker County supposed to follow these other counties off the cliff like lemmings?

- Everyone can vote currently in the primaries. It is a personal choice what a person chooses to register as, or are we now legislating personal responsibility now?

- Our Commissioners set policy, rules and pass ordinances. Just like our State and Federal representatives and senators. Other nonpartisan positions in the county do not do this—they carry out and implement the laws. Big difference in responsibility.

Ballots are out soon. Please join me in voting no against Baker Initiative 1-63. Baker County just does not need this.

**Jim Longwell**  
*Baker City*

### Our system isn’t broken, why change it?

To the Editor:  
Ballots are out this week for Baker measure 1-63. Have you ever wondered why some people are so interested in changing how we elect our County Commissioners? Electing our County Commissioners has worked fine for a lot of years. All of a sudden it’s a problem. Well I guess it’s become a problem since a few liberals cannot get elected. The system is not

broken, it works fine for everyone.

Our Commissioners make county laws, draft and pass county ordinances. Much like our Federal and State Representatives—which are partisan positions. Other nonpartisan offices in County Government, such as the Sheriff, District Attorney, Assessor and County Clerk do not set policy—they carry out laws, quite a difference in job descriptions.

Other counties throughout Oregon who have gone nonpartisan are taking steps to change their commissioners back to Partisan. The grand experiment has not worked so well.

As the Gentlemen from Josephine County stated, there are so many running, the good candidates get lost and the vote is so split, the best candidate does not win. Baker County has enough really serious issues to deal with – like keeping our roads open on public lands. Join me in voting against Measure 1-63. Baker County is just fine the way it is now.

**Laurie Hoopes**  
*Baker City*

### Out of bounds

To the Editor:  
Do you want your access to public lands treated like a basketball game, where you have to worry about if you are “in bounds” or “out of bounds” and having to live with the penalties of not staying within the boundaries set forth by the Forest Service? That is exactly what your life will be if the proposed designation of routes language and travel management plan are put into place on our National Forest.

Currently you are allowed to openly and freely access the Wallowa Whitman and Malheur National Forest via motorized means at your discretion unless otherwise noted by wilderness areas or areas specifically targeted as non-motorized. Once roads areas are designated a use, all motorized use off those roads will be prohibited (within a given buffer along the road) going from an open forest system to a closed forest system.

Much like the basketball court where you are not allowed to leave the court, motorized access will be disallowed from roughly 95% of your public lands. You may only play on the court the Forest Service allows, which will be along their selected roads, and if you play outside those lines you will be penalized up to \$5,000 and/or one year in jail.

When did you turn over your right of motorized access to the US Forest Service? Did any of you sign a document giving Mr. Montoya or Peña the authority to decide when and where you traveled? Offenses that will get you penalized if you go outside the designated area are: Firewood cutting, retrieving big game, dispersed camping, accessing historic berry and mushroom picking areas, accessing historic hunting areas, or simply recreating in your favorite area, just to name a few.

If you do not agree that our motorized access should be restricted, please let Secretary Tom Vilsack ([tom.vilsack@usda.gov](mailto:tom.vilsack@usda.gov)) and Robert Bonnie ([robert.bonnie@usda.gov](mailto:robert.bonnie@usda.gov)) to let them know how their staff is failing our communities and families.

**John George**  
*Bates*

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