

Opinion / Local

— EDITORIAL —

Los Angeles regretting nonpartisan stance

A March 7 opinion piece by Tim Rutten of the *Los Angeles Times* caught our attention this week. Their City Council positions, which were pushed over to nonpartisan in a movement not unlike to our own local 1-63 quite a while back, are now being considered for a push back to partisan.

Why? Because having nonpartisan positions in Los Angeles has resulted in voter turnout dropping to the point where almost no one cares enough about any candidate to vote these days.

The nonpartisan system has created widespread apathy.

Ruttan says, “What ought to be done? Here’s a radical reform that would make a difference: Abandon nonpartisan municipal elections. Without political parties, the only things around which people can cohere are ethnic identity and personality—politics’ lowest common denominators. Parties energize people and stimulate participation. They bring government down to the block level.”

In Los Angeles, 1.6 million people out of the city’s 3.8 million, are registered to vote. As stats go, the 239,374 total voters who participated in the last municipal election there is pathetic.

But then, if increased voter turnout exists in any nonpartisan situation, we haven’t been able to find an example.

The winner of the last race for Los Angeles mayor won with only 8% of the total votes cast for him. Not by a margin of 8%. Only 8% voted for him—and yet he won.

We can safely compare the mayor and other positions there on L.A.’s City Council to our County Commissioner positions because they have one common thread: these positions can create and enact ordinances—local laws by which residents must adhere.

Our County’s nonpartisan positions such as County Clerk, Treasurer, Sheriff, etc. serve to uphold and enforce laws created elsewhere. In their management capacity, they don’t participate in the creation of those ordinances.

That difference is why we believe in motivating the most voters possible to turn in their ballots behind candidates whose ideologies they match up with, particularly for these law-making positions. It’s vital to a healthy election.

1-63 proponents would have the public believe they’re backing their measure for the noble cause of having more people vote.

Their words are empty. Numbers, such as those coming straight out of L.A. as well as other counties in Oregon, don’t lie.

Ruttan is correct. Partisan politics bring government down to the “block level”—the most grassroots level in any community. It allows for elected Precinct Committee People (100 in Baker County, all elected, all partisan from both major parties) to put their boots on the ground and interact with voters. That involvement will mean differences of opinion, which we view as healthy, not “vitriolic” or “divisive.” God forbid we end up in a one-party society where disagreement is considered “mean-spirited.”

By our next issue, we’ll know which way our County is headed.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— GUEST OPINION —

Proud to have voted against SB941

By Mike Nearman

Senate Bill 941, the expanded gun background checks, has passed the House with all Republicans voting no, and mostly Democrats voting yes.

The bill will do little good, save for mollifying the consciences of those who want to do something—anything—to prevent gun violence. It will make it harder for anyone to get a firearm, both law-abiding citizens and the criminals who want to get illegal guns. It just makes it harder for everyone and never impossible for a determined criminal. Because they operate outside the law, they have more opportunities—illegal—to obtain a firearm. They will still get guns.

Earlier this session, the legislature passed a motor voter bill, which effectively registers to vote everyone who visits a DMV. During debate on that bill, we were told that we have to do anything to remove barriers to voting, because it’s a right, even if it impacts only a few people. I wish they thought the same on the right to bear arms.

Unrelated to the substance of the bill is the fact that by including an emergency clause, the bill denies the citizens their



Submitted Photo

Representative Mike Nearman serves House District 23. He can be reached at: Rep.MikeNearman@state.or.us.

right to a referendum, as they are guaranteed in the constitution. This happens on far too many bills and it’s a sign of legislative arrogance.

Finally, there is a disturbing trend in government that’s been discussed lately. It’s the idea that there are so many laws and rules that any person who is reasonably engaged in the normal business of life is in violation of several laws at any given time. In many ways, SB 941 is just another brick in this wall. Previously, I could loan a shotgun to a duck hunting buddy. Now, I have to get a background check to do it, do it illegally, or not do it at all.

I was proud to vote against SB 941.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Voters are being allowed to vote

To the Editor:
To my fellow Baker County Residents in favor of 1-63, you are allowed to vote in every general election. Whatever party affiliation you are registered as is your choice, and by doing so limits you to voting in primaries only for your party. Nobody forced you to register as you have, and if you want someone to vote for in general election, it is your party’s responsibility to put forth a candidate, not someone else’s. In my memory, nobody has ever been denied voting in a general election in Baker County, unless prohibited otherwise by law. It is an outright lie that people aren’t being allowed to vote in a general election. Any of you portraying this to be true, shame on you! Vote no on 1-63.

Wayne Dyke
Baker City

Vote no on 1-63

To the Editor:
Many want to be elected into Office, but what do we really know about them? What are their core beliefs? If they belong to a party at least we understand to a certain amount of degree what they stand for.

We have seen what has happened not only in our County, State and now even in our home base, Baker City the consequence when liberal beliefs are in place vs conservative principals.

We already have in place the ability for all individuals to vote if they want to vote in the general election, including those Non-Affiliated with any party affiliation. So why take away the ability to understand what they stand for and were they will lead us?

Take the time check out what happened in other counties who implemented this.

Alaska vote yes this and it was a disaster for them.

Maintain local control and keep core beliefs of candidates’ part of the selection process.

Do not fix something that is not broken. Vote no on 1-63.

Ramona Creighton
Baker City

Let L.A. be a lesson to the nonpartisan movement

To the Editor:
Time is getting short to mark and return your ballots in time to have your vote counted. The non partisan 1-63 that the Democrats put together is another attempt by them to try to control by confusion. The Oregon counties that have tried non partisan voting are changing back because of lacking voter interest.

Case in point was their experiment in non partisan politics in Los Angeles, last week there was another in a long series of Democratic non partisan catastrophes. The non partisan voting in Los Angeles dropped down to only 15% of registered voters who cast their ballots to fill municipal offices. When the two parties put forth candidates who compete for a municipal office such as in this last Commissioner’s race you want and get an informed choice. If there is anything good or bad about the candidate the that would make you vote either for them or against them you will know it by election time.

Don’t be fooled by all of the hype that the Democrats are putting out on this non partisan 1-63, it is failing from the simple fact that people lose interest and don’t vote, Los Angeles and other Oregon Counties are a case in point. Lets keep our two party system and vote this 1-63 down, stand with me and vote NO.

Chuck Chase
Baker City

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Infant’s death investigated

The Baker County Major Crime Team is investigating the death of a three-month-old infant in Baker City.

On May 11th, 2015 at about 5:50 a.m., the infant was brought to the Saint Alphonsus Hospital Emergency Room by his parents. The infant was unresponsive and lifesaving

efforts were unsuccessful. The Baker County Major Crime Team responded and assumed the investigation. An autopsy is scheduled for today with the Oregon State Medical Examiner’s Office.

The infant was identified as Xysis Lahey II of Baker City.

The Baker County Ma-

Major Crime Team consists of the Baker County District Attorney’s Office, detectives from the Baker City Police Department, the Baker County Sheriff’s Office and the Oregon State Police.

The investigation is continuing and further information will be released when it becomes available.

Heritage Museum receives grant

The Friends of the Baker Heritage Museum are proud to announce that they have received a grant from The Oregon Community Foundation – Edna E. Harrell Community Children’s Fund in the amount of \$850.

These grant funds will be used to support the

Baker Heritage Museum’s Kid’s Camp July 20-24th. The annual kid’s camp provides a chance for local children to learn about the history of Baker County, rocks and minerals and wildlife in a fun and safe environment.

The camp accommodates 25 children, there

are scholarships available. Please contact the Museum if interested.

The Museum Commission wishes to express its deep appreciation to The Oregon Community Foundation and Edna Harrell for this generous grant and for making the 2015 Kid’s Camp possible.

Paving project ahead for Vale area

The Oregon Department of Transportation will repave the section of US 20/26 between Vale and Cairo Junction in Malheur County this summer. Work will consist of grinding out deteriorating pavement and inlaying a new asphalt

surface. The project will include a center-line rumble strip and new striping. Travelers can expect single-lane traffic controlled by flaggers and pilot cars with delays of up to twenty minutes through the work zone.

The project is expected to start around mid-July with all work finished before the end of October. Paving activities will likely take place at night and take about three weeks to complete.

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