

# Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

## Saying no to nonpartisan... again

Just the same as last year when 1-63 proponents tried to push through a nonpartisan movement and failed, we're still acutely aware that with this editorial, we remain the only newspaper in Baker County to speak out against the new, nearly identical nonpartisan initiative 1-74, and agree with what Baker County voters decided in the last election.

Last year, voters opted for many good reasons to keep our County Commissioner seats partisan. Unhappy with the will of the people, proponents of the idea thought they'd try again—for a different result. We hope it doesn't work.

While new names of new Chief Petitioners have been added to 1-74, the driving forces behind it (Democrat Randy Joseph and left-leaning Republican Jan Kerns) remain the same.

Forgive us if much of this editorial reads the same as last year's as a result.

The fact is, 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 last year's official "Yes on 1-63, Baker County People over Politics" committee has experienced one. We don't believe the committee on this year's "Yes on 1-74, Kick Politics out of Baker County" has either.

We'd like to give—again—our firsthand witnessing of the local representative process that proponents of 1-74 would see destroyed with their feel-good nonpartisan initiative.

When Dr. Carl Stiff resigned three years ago 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 "bitter-

ness" or "division" as nonpartisan 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 process would have been triggered with that party.

The grassroots level of the party, your Baker County Precinct Committee People—or PCPs, 48 in each party based on our county's population this year—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 just under 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 at the time, 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. Without this process, two people (yes, only two as opposed to 48), the remaining commissioners, would have hand-selected the replacement. Without this process, if two commissioners resigned, the Governor in Salem would have chosen our next commissioner.

*This* is the local process 1-74 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 1-74 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 1-74 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 1-74 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 last 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 1-74 will do their best to make voters think it is.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

## — LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### Vote no on 1-74

To the Editor:

A wise old Indian Chief once said the white people are really strange. Their philosophy that one can cut one end of blanket off and sew it back on other end to make blanket longer is very odd. Welcome daylight savings time again.

I find Baker County Democratic Party also very odd. The party of good intentions, yes, but the party of common sense and pragmatic results, absolutely not.

The yes on 1-74 group seem to think if they just do a little better packing and marking the non-partisan issue, the votes of Baker County will be good citizens and open their mouths wide and take Dr. Marshall McComb's cod liver oil medicine this time.

Why can't the Democratic Party articulate how they would fund 5-J and other school districts along with the county roads? Why cannot the Democratic tell the voters of Baker County how Democratic Party would come alongside the Federal land management agency of BLM and USFS and develop a plan to restore forest health?

But no, they spend hundreds and hundreds of dollars on having the voters say yes on measure 1-74.

If I may suggest, the Baker County Democratic Party should nominate Marshall McComb for the next open County Commissionership position. He could then articulate his party's unique position and agenda clearly so the voters know exactly what he stands for.

No, Marshall and the Democratic Party spend so much time ducking and weaving on having the voters say yes on measure 1-74. If Marshall would just spend his time being honest about what he stands for, the voters of Baker County would embrace his positions and policies and he would win his victory's in a in a landslide, not a whisker!

I urge to vote no on measure 1-74. The wheel is not broken and does not need to be fixed. The current requirements of a partisan County Commissioner position has worked well for Baker County.

Arvid Andersen  
Baker City

### Bud Pierce for Governor!

To the Editor:

Bud Pierce is the most positive and needed change that our citizens could make in this very important election! Our State of Oregon has been governed by a philosophy that has, and continues to believe that a centralized authority emanating from Salem is the basis of sound representative government. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Please consider the reality of decline that our rural communities languish in today. For thirty plus years this elitism of control, through these ill-founded policies, has eroded our economic, as well as our social base, here east of the Cascades.

The facts are very plain. Our rural Communities, that are the fabric of our culture, have been decimated by the overreach of this controlling policy, and the neglect to engage our knowledge with the wisdom of managing our valuable Natural Resources. Most, if not all of our rural communities are in decline with lowering population, schools closing/consolidating for lack of kids to educate. Our sons and daughters having to leave because there is no sustainable employment to support families. I want to make clear that this devastation to our side of Oregon, was not the policy makers intended outcome. It is because we, the Stewards of our communities were,

and continue to be ignored for our ability in generating conscientious management practices that will enhance not only the environmental aspects, but also create a sustainable economy to make our rural side of Oregon thrive again!!

Bud Pierce is that much needed change in direction! He has visited our east side and demonstrates his belief in our abilities that we know what is best for our neighborhoods and small towns. Bud understands and truly believes that the people that live here have the most invested in a sustainable prosperity, along with the utmost concern for doing what is right in utilizing our tremendous resource base. Assuredly, we on east side of the Cascades, can turn this state around, getting it back on track, and leaving the old stale, corrupt policies of the last 30+ years behind. If we enthusiastically participate in the election process, and vote for Bud Pierce as Governor we can invigorate our communities once again. I implore you to vote, and for you to encourage family and friends to engage. Oregon desperately needs a positive, bold change for all of us! Bud Pierce as Governor, can be the catalyst for a new beginning!

Curt Martin  
North Powder

### The Chamber of Commerce says no to M97

To the Editor:

The Baker County Chamber of Commerce strongly opposes Measure 97 because the facts are clear—it is a \$6 billion back door sales tax that would harm Oregon consumers and small businesses with no guarantee the money would go to education, senior services or affordable healthcare.

We're urging you to vote no on Measure 97 and to spread the word to others. Measure 97 is a tax on total sales—not profits—that would increase consumer costs for all types of products and services. It has no exemptions – most costs would be passed on to Oregon consumers and small businesses through higher prices for everything from food, clothing, gasoline, utilities, cars and housing to phone service, insurance, medicine and healthcare.

The nonpartisan Legislative Revenue Office concluded Measure 97 would increase costs for a typical family by \$600 per year, and that it would especially hurt low- and middle-income families and seniors who can least afford it.

Measure 97 would cause the loss of 38,000 local jobs, according to the State of Oregon's study.

And, as we wrote above, there would be no guarantee that the money would go to education, healthcare or seniors. The Legislature's own top legal authority has stated the Legislature could spend the money "in any way it chooses."

Ballots will be arriving next week. Now is the time for us to be actively involved to help defeat Measure 97.

The No on 97 campaign has resources you can share, such as:

- Breakroom posters
- Easy-to-customize emails, website content and social media
- Store, lawn and road signs
- Bumper stickers, lapel stickers, window signs
- Fact sheets
- And much more.

Contact us at the Chamber office or the campaign at info@defeat97.com to request materials and a member of

their team will get them to you right away.

Visit NOon97.com and learn why the Baker County Chamber of Commerce has joined the coalition of more than 26,000 Oregon consumers, small businesses, family farmers, healthcare professionals, educators, community leaders and organizations from every part of the state in urging you to vote no on Measure 97 this November.

Shelly Cutler  
Executive Director  
Baker County Chamber of Commerce  
& Visitor's Bureau

### Please vote no on 1-74

To the Editor:

Once again you have a vote to decide whether the position of County Commissioners in Baker County should be non-partisan. Who is behind this effort and why, must be the question asked. Why should party affiliation NOT be part of the equation? County Commissioners votes impact every area of those in the county. There are two very different value systems between the major parties, just look at the state of the State.

We have one party that loves to regulate every area of our lives, tax and spend beyond what can be supported (PERS) and hence Ballot Measure 97. The other fights to rein in spending, supports private enterprise and personal freedoms against a 30 year dynasty called the Democratic Party.

Have you looked at who is supporting this change?

Common Cause of Oregon (described as "non-partisan" but the entire staff and super majority of the governing board are Democrats and supports the progressive agenda), Rural Organizing Project- again described as "non-partisan" but from their website: Human dignity groups—typically small and volunteer-led—have organized since the early 1990s to break down isolation and join together to confront intense homophobia, xenophobia, and racism perpetuated in rural towns by the extreme Right. ROP was formed to strengthen these groups, invest in the leadership and skills of these local organizers, and create a new vision of progressive organizing in rural Oregon."

Non-partisan? You decide. I would encourage to research who is supporting this and see if they represent your values. If a candidate believes in their party's agenda why do they run from their party affiliation? Have you ever tried to research what the judges on the "non-partisan" tickets believe or support? For those that state "keep politics out of the counties business", this is a political position with decisions that will impact you and your family.

Candidates affiliate with a major party (Independent, Democratic, or Republican) because they associate with the beliefs of that party. This says a lot about what influences them, how they will vote, and who they align with. Why do the Democrats in Baker County not have a candidate on the ballot? Why do they believe the only way to win an election is to make it "non-partisan"? Non-partisan is just a veil to cloche positions and candidates.

With three major parties now represented in Oregon, and with the argument that there are 5,600 non-Republican voters, it's hard to believe that there is not more behind this issue that just "meaningful say" in the elections. Please vote no on Measure 1-74.

Chris Barreto  
Cove