

## Panel discusses political system



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Ryan Lathen (left) Mayor Daniel Dalegowski, Michelle Binker, Charlotte Hutt and Jack Dwyer along with Patty Downing (pictured below) fielded questions during Democracy at Risk at IVHS Sunday, Nov. 5.

*“(I.V. Indivisible) had the sense that people in the community were concerned about the state of government and didn’t know where to turn.”*

By Laura Mancuso  
IVN Editor

Conversation and fixing problems within our government was the focus of Democracy At Risk: a nonpartisan panel and community dialogue Nov. 5 at the Illinois Valley High School. Almost 70 people attended the event presented by Illinois Valley Indivisible.

Illinois Valley Indivisible is a group of concerned citizens that would like to make a grassroots difference in their community and make democracy stronger.

Gary Eby, from I.V. Indivisible, an author, musician and retired social worker was the moderator of the event and said they would explore the question, “Is our democracy in serious trouble?”

The evening started out with “America the Beautiful” played on guitar and sang by Kent Fisher and an introduction by Jack Dwyer of I.V. Indivisible, a former Three Rivers school teacher who has lived in the I.V. for the past 45 years.

The nonpartisan panel consisted of Patty Downing, a nonprofit specialist who has been in the I.V. for 21 years; Ryan Lathen, I.V. High School teacher of U.S history, government and economics; Daniel Dalegowski, mayor of Cave Junction; Michelle Binker, with a background in news media and community government service; Charlotte Hutt, retired Rogue Community College instructor; and Dwyer.

The following is a summary of the panel discussion:

Eby asked the panel a series of questions and then allowed the audience time to ask questions.

The first question was, “Is our election system working?”

In response Downing, Hutt and Dwyer brought up the problems in our country with voter suppression such as changing polling locations and hours, stricter voter identification and qualifications, number of polling places, voter registration problems and changing district lines which becomes gerrymandering.

Although Lathen pointed out that our “Electoral College system is doing what it was meant to do” (maintaining state power), Dalegowski was concerned that



Gary Eby

Patty Downing

Carol Valentine, Illinois Valley Indivisible

the electoral vote “may not be what the founding fathers anticipated” in regards to consolidation of power.

On a positive note, Binker relayed that in the state of Oregon they did a fantastic job with voter registration, recounts and the voting process due to a lot of good people of integrity involved.

Audience member John Gardiner was concerned about the power of money dominating the election system with Citizens United and the panel agreed that Citizens United was a significant problem along with excessive lobbying from the rich.

Next, Eby asked the panel, “Are First Amendment freedoms under attack and are we at risk?”

Downing explained that our First Amendment rights consisted of freedom of religion, exercising our freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom to address the government with grievances...and our freedoms depended on our advocacy and our grassroots activity in order to make change that will protect our freedoms.

Dwyer explained that the media was under attack and stressed the importance of the freedom of the press to keep people accountable.

Binker pointed out that we have to use our rights so they continue to exist and urges people to “fight back the tendency to be lazy and complacent.”

Lathen felt that our checks and balances system are still in place and is heartened by the fact that constitutional rights are still being upheld using the example of burning flags even though it is not an agreeable situation with most Americans. Dalegowski agreed that the courts were stepping in to protect our rights.

Eby followed that with, “Is polarization tearing democracy a part? Why is there not more bipartisan work?”

The panel agreed that the country has divided itself and Lathen pointed out that it was not only a modern situation and cited past polarization in U.S. History during the Civil War.

Hutt recommended reading the “Big Sort” by Bill Bishop published in 2008 and emphasized that “we can agree to disagree...but we can’t keep going our separate ways.”

Dalegowski pointed out that social media has created “conversation bomb” situations and that it is important to “critically examine what we encounter” in social media especially with advertising.

As a solution to polarization issues, Binker reminded the audience that polarization is not set in stone, “We can change ... listen to where others have come from and back away from polarization that happened in 1860. Binker also urged that “we need grace and humility in public discourse.”

SEE PANEL ON A-10

## RR weed ban rolls forward

Jason McMillen  
IVN Contributing Writer

Ordinance No. 2017-001, which aims to ban the production of commercial cannabis on Rural Residential (RR) land, went through its second first reading at the Nov. 1 Weekly Business Session and passed 2-0. Commissioner Simon Hare abstained his vote and announced that he’s recused himself entirely from all further deliberations on the ordinance, citing perceived conflicts of interest. The second reading is scheduled for Nov. 29 at the Anne Basker Auditorium at 9 a.m. Before being signed, the proposed rule regarding the prohibition of work being performed at cannabis production sites on Sundays was stricken. Lawful hours of operation outlined in 2017-001 remain from dawn to dusk.

“The distraction is the fact that my family owns EFU land, exclusive farm use land, and by some measures people could construe that that would make our property more valuable,” Hare said, further acknowledging that he’s also invested in a Southern Oregon Hemp company. He added that these allegations have grown to be a distraction and that he doesn’t want to perpetuate that.

SEE BAN ON A-12



(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Lily Morgan (left) deep in thought while Julie Schmelzer speaks and Dan DeYoung looks on during the Weekly Business Session at the Anne Basker Auditorium in Grants Pass Wednesday, Nov. 1.

## Food & Friends heading up River

By Laura Mancuso  
IVN Editor

Food & Friends Senior Meals Program will be serving lunch at their new location in Cave Junction at the Illinois Valley Senior Center, 520 E. River Street starting Wednesday, Nov. 15.

“Monday the 13th is the last day we will be serving in the Old County Building,” explained Kristi Welburn, Food & Friends nutrition supervisor. “Meals on Wheels and the dining will stay the same – just be at a different place.”

Food & Friends is a program of the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG). Evelyn Kinsella, nutrition program manager for RVCOG, said, “Thanks to the generosity of the Senior Center members we have a great new home to continue providing a hot nutritious lunch to Illinois Valley seniors age 60 years and older. The new location will also provide a much needed base for our Meals on Wheels service, which delivers meals to those folks who have difficulty leaving their home.

“As a result, we expect no interruption to service in Cave Junction – just a great new location with tons of parking! Lunch is served on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 11:30 a.m. for a suggested donation of \$2.75,

for those aged 60 and older. Please come and join us, we’d love to meet you; while you’re here you may see some old friends, or perhaps make new ones!”

Kinsella also relayed, “We are grateful that the wonderful folks at the Illinois Valley Senior Center are providing space for our meals program. Their willingness to share their space makes the continuation of our program in Cave Junction possible.”

Jean Shubert, I.V. Senior Center president explained that it made sense to allow Food & Friends to use the senior center since the County Building is going to be converted to the I.V. Senior Center Thrift Store.

It also made sense to allow Food & Friends at the senior center due to the fact that “one half of them we already know because they are senior center members,” said Shubert.

Shubert also mentioned that the Food & Friends dining will be set-up by the stage and that “Sherry (Overstreet) will still be there taking names and collecting donations.”

The Food & Friends menu is posted in the *Illinois Valley News* each week inside the “Senior Spotlight.” If you are interested in volunteering for the Food & Friends Program or would like to have meals delivered to your home please call 541-955-8839.

Matsutake forecast for the upcoming season not looking good.

Read more on A-5