

Reader's Questions and Answers

What is all this "block voting" business about anyway? That was a question a tribal member from the Coast had, and because I was going to a couple of these Candidate Fairs anyway, I decided to see if I could get an answer.

I questioned the candidates who attended the Salem and Springfield Candidate's Fair. This is what I found out.

1) There are at least two meanings to the term "block voting." This first meaning goes like this: "families meet and decide to all vote for the same candidate(s) during Tribal Council election."

Candidates Mike Berry, Jane John, Mary Viles, and Jessie Davis stated flatly that they had never, and were not presently, participants in block voting, although Jane John did add that the first time she ran for Council, she received a letter from another candidate that came under the definition "block voting."

Candidate Delores Pigsley stated that her family—the Lane Family—had made it a custom to meet prior to elections and decide as a family who they would vote for. Delores also stated that this year, because of her son's health problems, the Lanes had not met for this purpose. Delores stated that she saw nothing unethical about families doing this. If other candidates had a contrary opinion, they did not express it.

2) The second definition that surfaced for "block voting" goes like this: "a family of a candidate for Tribal Council decides to vote for certain other candidates and then works out a 'vote swapping' arrangement with the families of one or more other candidates."

All the candidates I questioned denied that they had ever entered into such a "vote swapping" arrangement, either this year or in past elections.

What constitutes a "vote swapping" arrangement becomes the question. Delores Pigsley stated that her family has in the past "sent out letters." I took that to mean that her family has communicated to candidates that the Lane Family had decided to support them.

Delores' statement made me remember a Candidates Fair two years ago in Salem at which Joe Lane, an elder brother to Delores Pigsley, told candidate Selene Lynch that the Lane Family had met and decided to support her. I didn't have time to contact Selene Lynch to see how she understood Joe Lane's announcement, or whether the announcement was followed by a letter, but I do remember that Bud Lane, a nephew to Joe Lane, was also a candidate in the same election.

It is possible that Selene Lynch took Joe Lane's statement of the Lane Family's support for her as an offer for her, and her family, to support the Lane family candidate, although I hasten to add that Joe Lane never directly sought such support for his nephew to my knowledge.

3) Both of the practices described above appear

to give rise to many possibilities for suspicions, intrigues and betrayals. No candidate would ever be able to place much confidence in an announcement made by a member of another candidate's family during election time, would they? Neither would a family leader be able to put complete confidence in the "obedience" of family members who might have been told to vote in a way contrary to their inclinations, could they?

And of course, nothing would prevent the family of one candidate from sending out letters of support to more than just two candidates. As a matter of fact, I have heard rumors of just such an event—an election at Siletz in which more than two candidates received letters from a certain family pledging that family's support.

4) If anyone saved such letters from elections past, I'd be happy to receive a copy. But without benefit of the actual letters, I can offer little more in way of an answer.

5) One last note: All candidates suggested that they considered "vote swapping" schemes unappealing. But Delores Pigsley was the only candidate to raise the question directly. She stated that in her opinion the practice was "probably not illegal, but unethical."

Dear Readers,

I wanted to reverse the process this issue and ask you a question.

How much did Craig Dorsay make last year working for the Tribe?

My purpose in asking this question is to gather information that I hope to share with readers of either this newsletter or the tribal newsletter.

Sincerely,

Andrew Viles
Editor

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