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Two Sections

Reagan allies target Riles

California school chief under fire

by Chuck Idelson
and Ann Washington

SAN FRANCISCO — At a time of concerted nationwide attack on public schools, education in California is at a dangerous crossroads.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Wilson Riles, the state's only statewide elected black official, faces a tough reelection battle November 2nd against a wealthy Marin County school educator nurtured and financially backed by long-time supporters of Ronald Reagan and other players in the campaign against public schools.

Since ousting the reactionary incumbent Max Rafferty in 1970, Riles has been noted for his defense of quality, integrated education for children of all races, for his staunch

support of bilingual education, and for development of innovative programs like early childhood education, and programs for children with disabilities.

"His priorities and concerns in public education have provided the kind of state leadership we need," said Yvonne Golden, principal of Opportunity II High School in San Francisco.

Priorities are a key issue in a state that since the passage of Prop. 13 has fallen from third to 50th in the nation in funding of schools.

"With diminishing resources, and battles over who will get them, it's critical to have someone there fighting for all the children of the state," observes Berkeley School Board member Steve Lutig.

Riles' opponent Bill Honig claims the falloff of funding reflects public

disenchantment with public schools. His response is a demagogic call for a return to "basics" and tighter standards and discipline in the schools.

Honig opposes additional funds for education, until the schools supposedly do a "better job" educating students.

Honig bases his claims of the decline of education on arguable test score results. But, as Riles noted in a recent San Francisco press conference, scores have improved for 15 straight years at the 3rd grade level, and have climbed for almost as many years at the 6th grade.

Latest results even show an improvement at the high school level, Riles noted. After many years of no growth, those scores have now gone up two years in a row, he added.

Honig's call to hold off funds, Riles warned, "is like having a sick baby and not giving it any milk until it gets better. Our teachers need to be supported, not trashed."

While Honig publicly opposed vouchers (tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools), perusal of his list of endorsers and financial backers reveals many supporters of the assault on public schools inspired by the White House.

By spending over \$1 million in the June primary, Honig managed to finish ahead of three rightwing candidates to compete in the runoff with Riles. Still, it is Riles who most forcefully stands against the Reaganite-style threat to public education.

from the People's World



The world still goes on . . . While many prepare for election day: distribute literature, pound in lawn signs, make those last minute calls to get out the vote, study the voters' pamphlet and make the important decisions—life goes on. For Anjone Bryant, 7, the big effort of the moment is learning to skate, aided by her grandmother, Willie Miles. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Your vote counts: Use it

by Congressman Ron Wyden

Tuesday, November 2, is an important day for minorities and other Oregonians. It is your chance to have your say about the directions your community, state and country will take in upcoming months and years.

It is chance you can't afford to pass up.

In recent years an increasing number of Americans have chosen not to take advantage of their right to vote.

For the most part, it's easy to understand why. Many voters have become discouraged with government. They see it as an amorphous, unresponsive beast that cannot be changed. Still others feel that one vote won't make a difference anyway.

It's easy to understand why voters are discouraged—but the trend is nonetheless dangerous. Your vote alone may not turn the tide, but

added to those of others who feel like you, it can make the difference.

In recent years, blacks have left their imprint on the electoral process. Two years ago, Californians selected the first black speaker of the state legislature, Willie Brown, and this year, Los Angeles' Mayor Tom Bradley, is the odds-on favorite to be the first elected black governor in the nation. Black voters are also flexing their muscles in Mississippi and Missouri where black candidates are considered likely victors for new Congressional seats.

But the war is far from won. The last two years have not been good ones overall for minority Americans. Important social programs have been cut or threatened. Affirmative action and equal employment opportunity programs have been weakened. The Voting Rights Act barely survived opponents' attacks. And unemployment among blacks is at its highest point since the

Great Depression.

So what can you do about it? Vote.

Study the records of elected officials and their challengers. Decide for yourself whether those records add up for minorities and other Americans.

Will the man or woman who is seeking your vote support those issues that will create jobs for minorities and others? Or will he or she bow to the wishes of the big oil companies and other special interests?

Does he or she demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts of fairness—that is, will he or she turn to wasteful Pentagon practices and other unjustifiable federal expenses for cuts needed to balance the budget—or will he or she merely vote to balance the budget on the backs of America's poor and needy?

Is he or she an independent thinker—an individual who will listen to the ideas and concerns of his or her

constituents and then work to promote those ideas in Washington, D.C.? Or will he or she just rubber-stamp the political philosophies of those in power?

Once you have evaluated the records of the candidates, go to the polls and cast your vote. If you do not, you have given up the greatest privilege of living in a democratic society—the right to choose your own representatives and to hold them accountable for their performance.

Casting your vote November 2 will not change matters overnight.

But if you, your neighbor, your co-worker, and others who think like you do, combine forces to elect those who care about the needs of minorities, working men and women, retirees and the needy, we can begin to get this nation headed in the right direction.

And that will help us all.

Measure 3: Oregon voters' most crucial decision

by Church Clemans, Superintendent
Oregon City Public Schools

The biggest question before voters November 2 is Ballot Measure 3: the so-called one and one-half per cent property tax limitation. The logical first reaction for Oregonians is to say, "Sure, I'd like to cut my taxes—I am going to vote for Measure 3." But simply cutting taxes would not be the only result of the passage of Measure 3. Consider also its devastation of economic development with a resulting increase in unemployment, the derailing of our Veterans Farm and Home Loan Program, and the serious loss of local government services such as police and fire protection, schools, programs for the handicapped and elderly, not to mention streets, sewers, roads and other vital services.

Analysis

First, let's consider the impact of Measure 3 on economic development. Once the 1 1/2 per cent limit were in place, nothing, not a vote of the people or a vote of the Legislature—could exceed that lid. There would be no new bonding for sewers or roads or water lines to prepare industrially zoned land for development. There are thousands of acres of property in Oregon zoned for industrial and commercial development. We vitally need to bring clean, new businesses to Oregon to provide jobs for the hundreds of thousands of Oregonians who are now looking for work. Eighty per cent of the available land in Oregon is not now served by sewers, roads, water hook-ups, and other essential services necessary to economic development. Under Measure 3, these thousands of acres would stand idle because State and local government would have their hands tied. How is this so? Just like a family buying a house, cities or counties must borrow money at the lowest possible rate and repay that loan over time. They pay for the public services through the sale of bonds. Ballot Measure 3 would make Oregon's bonds

much more expensive and much less attractive to the eastern lending institutions that have been making inexpensive loans. Under Ballot Measure 3, Oregon would say to potential new business ventures, "Come on to Oregon. We really want you—but, by the way, we can't afford to give you a sewer hook-up, a new road, or necessary water services." Attracting new business and industry to Oregon is tough enough now. Don't throw another roadblock into the process.

And what about Oregon's self-supporting Veterans Farm and Home Loan Program? Ballot Measure 3 would stop the issuing of new loans under that attractive program. Approximately 133,000 Oregonians are still eligible for Veterans Farm and Home Loans. If you are a Veteran and plan to use your eligibility to purchase a home or a farm, or to remodel your current place, forget it if Ballot Measure 3 passes.

And what about local government services? Backers of Ballot Measure 3 claim that their measure "guarantees" the protection of essential services. But the measure goes even further and defines for us what essential services are: police, sheriff, fire protection, ambulance, and paramedical services. Somehow the backers of the measure don't think that courts, roads, sewers, jails or schools are essential. What's worse, the so-called guarantee for essential services specifies only that those services will receive 100 per cent of what they had in 1979. Remember that the measure would go into effect in 1983 and would ignore the more than 45 per cent increase in the cost of doing business in the intervening four years. Consider also the massive unemployment that would result when schools, cities, and counties are forced to lay off employees because they have lost up to one-third of their revenues beginning in 1983-84.

Ballot Measure 3 would strike an immediate and severe blow to Oregon education. Oregon's investment in education has paid real dividends. Our illiteracy rate is half that of the national average. Half of Oregon's high school seniors further their education. Oregon students score at the top on national achievement tests. What would Ballot Measure 3 do? Let's look at California, which used to be a leader in education. Under their limitation measure schools have fallen from fourth to 48th place nationally. Cali-

fornia schools are highest in class size. A California senior graduating today would receive the equivalent of a student graduating at the beginning of the eleventh grade in Oregon.

Oregon's schools have already cut back because of economic hard times. Ballot Measure 3 is way more than mere belt tightening. It's a heavy slash at the very fiber of our educational system.

Consider also who wins and who loses under Ballot Measure 3. About 60 per cent of Oregon property taxes are paid by commercial and business interests. Therefore, 60 per cent of the relief goes to the business community which has neither sought nor particularly needs this sort of tax relief. Furthermore, three-fourths of business property is owned by regional or national interests. This property tax relief goes outside the Oregon borders.

And finally, there are other important concerns: Oregon has had a long-standing tradition of local control. Recently, for example, Portlanders said "yes" to improving their stadium, to a new performing arts center, and to a new tax base for their school system. Ballot Measure 3 would say that local voters don't have the sense to make such judgments for themselves and would move decision making authority from the local level to Salem where down-state and Eastern Oregon Legislators would be making important policy decisions for Portland people. And another thing: Ballot Measure 3 would cause Oregonians to ship more money to the Federal government—about \$250 million in the 1983-85 biennium, and more money to the State Legislature to spend as well. We have no reason to believe that much, if any, of that additional tax would come back to Oregon. It is far more likely that it would be pumped into Southern California as part of the military/aerospace spending that the Federal government has been doing.

Ballot Measure 3 is much more than a simple property tax limitation measure. It is complicated. It requires great study and understanding. I would urge all Oregonians to know as much as possible about it so they can make the absolutely best informed choice possible on November 2nd, balancing the property tax relief that can be expected against the loss of local control, the loss of local government services, and the shift of the tax burden that would result.