



“Challenging People to Shape
a Better Future Now”

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Oregon: Vote Yes on Measure 90

In 2007, while I was a member of the Oregon State Senate, I voted to oppose Senate Bill 630, which would have created a non-partisan primary. At the time I did not believe that the 50 plus one aspect of the bill represented the best interests of my constituents in Senate District 22 or that of all Oregonians. Measure 90 ensures that there is both a primary and a general election.

I have watched partisan gridlock in the country continue to get worse over the past several years, and remembering the 16-day gov- ernment shut down in October 2013, I came to revisit my views. I’ve heard all of the arguments surrounding measure 90 and am now supporting it. To me the most important reason to support Measure 90 is that a democracy does not lock out over 650,000 Orego- nians from our primary elections, many of them young people aged 40 and under, because of a lack of party affiliation or minor party affiliation as our system does today.

Those 650,000 taxpaying voters, could fill Autzen (Oregon Ducks) and Reser (Oregon State Beavers) Stadiums 6.5 times combined, they could fill up the Moda Center (Portland Trailblazers) 32 times, and they are more than the entire population of the City of Portland.



GUEST
COLUMN

Margaret
Carter

According to Kate Brown’s office, my former senate colleague and current Secretary of State, nearly 32% of all Oregon voters are either minor party or non-affil- iated voters and of those 49% are under the age of 40. And, a few more facts: As of July, non-affil- iated or minor party voters

years ago.

There is an argument that as a former legislator, educator, mother of nine and grandmother of 26 grandchildren that I’d like to refute-this notion that an open pri- mary will hurt minorities and minority representation. The inter- ests of traditionally disenfranchised populations are not generally well represented when there is little opportunity for people from those communities to be elected. That is especially true for young people, women, LGBTQ, and communities of color.

Since the opponents of Measure 90 often point to California as a place where this has not worked,

includes Hispanic, African-Ameri- can, and Asian-American legislators. I hope to be able to say something similar in Oregon one day.

Measure 90 is not a silver bullet that will solve all of the problems in politics, such as campaign finance reform, voter turnout, or gerrymandering. That’s not its job. What Measure 90 does do is pro- vide over 650,000 disenfranchised, taxpaying voters an opportunity to participate in the elections that currently count the most in our state, where nearly 90% of our legislative primaries decide our general elections.

It gives voters real choices at the ballot box by listing not just the candidate’s affiliation but also the parties that have endorsed them and the endorsements that they have actually accepted. This is important information for voters that will be listed right on the bal- lot.

Let’s vote yes for real choices and re-establish Oregon as a pro- gressive leader on voting rights!

Margaret Carter is a retired Oregon State Senator and Presi- dent Pro-Tempore, former Portland Urban League President and former Chair of the Oregon Democratic Party, Portland, Ore- gon.

As of July, non-affiliated or minor party voters outnumbered Oregon Republicans 663,197 to 650,407

outnumbered Oregon Republicans 663,197 to 650,407, and national- ly 46% of the Latino electorate are not registering with the major par- ties. According to a recent poll by Gallup, 42% of Americans identi- fy themselves as independent or non-affiliated voters, the highest Gallup has measured since it began surveying this question 25

let’s consider their U.S. House, state house and state senate dele- gations. Before redistricting reforms and adoption of the open primary, California had 57 minori- ty representatives, following the reforms and the 2012 elections California saw a net gain of an additional 11 seats held by minori- ties in that short period. This

Hands Up! Driving While Black – and Poor

St. Louis County has 90 municipalities – ranging in population from 13 to nearly 52,000 – and most of them sustain themselves by targeting, fining and jailing poor Missouri resi- dents, many of them Black, who are unable to pay traffic tickets.

A “white paper” by ArchCity Defenders, a group that defends the poor in the St. Louis area for free, carefully details how Ferguson and other small villages and municipal- ities in the state have perfected the art of exploiting those who drive while Black – and poor.

According to the report, three municipal courts in Missouri – Ferguson, Bel-Ridge and Floris- sant – “were chronic offenders and serve as prime examples of how these practices violate fundamen- tal rights of the poor, undermine public confidence in the judicial system, and create inefficiencies.”

It continued, “Overall, we found that by disproportionately stop- ping, charging and fining the poor and minorities, by closing the Courts to the public, and by incar- cerating people for the failure to pay fines, these policies uninten- tionally push the poor further into poverty, prevent the homeless from accessing the housing, treat- ment, and jobs they so desperately need to regain stability in their lives, and violate the Constitution.

“These ongoing violations of the most fundamental guarantees of the Constitution are the product of a disordered, fragmented, and inefficient approach to criminal justice in St. Louis County. It rep- resents a failure of the Municipalities to comply with the guarantees of counsel, reasonable bond assessments, and other con- stitutional and legal rights of those



THE CURRY
REPORT

George E.
Curry

accused. And, perhaps most importantly, these practices create animosity in the community, con-

none were arrested.

- In Ferguson, 86 percent of all traffic stops in 2013 involved Blacks. Of those stopped, Blacks were almost twice as likely as Whites to be searched (12.1 per- cent vs. 6.9 percent) and twice as likely to be arrested (10.4 percent vs. 5.2 percent). Interestingly, after being searched, only 21.7 percent of Blacks were found with contraband, compared to 34 percent of Whites.
- In Florissant, Blacks were

‘By disproportionately stopping, charging and fining the poor and minorities, by closing the Courts to the public, and by incarcerating people for the failure to pay fines, these policies unintentionally push the poor further into poverty’

tribute to the fractured nature of the St. Louis region, and cost the individual municipalities and the region financially.”

Unmistakably, poor Blacks drive through certain Missouri munici- palities with a huge X on their back.

- Last year in Bel-Ridge, 75.7 per- cent of all traffic stops involved Black motorists. What happened after the stops is even more telling. According to the study, 100 percent of all searches and arrests growing out of traffic stops were of African Ameri- cans. In other words, of 775 Blacks pulled over by police, 11 were searched and 32 were arrested. Of 219 non-Blacks stopped, none were searched and

arrested 14.9 percent of the time, twice the White rate of 7.2 per- cent. Whites were searched 8 percent of the time vs. 15.8 per- cent of Blacks. Yet, contraband was found on only 7.4 percent of Black residents compared to 12 percent of Whites.

These disproportionate arrests of Blacks translates into more green for the cities.

For example, of Pine Lawn’s 4,204 residents, 96 percent are Black. It has a per capita income of only \$13,000. Last year, Pine Lawn collected more than \$1.7 million in fines and court fees. That’s \$500,000 more than Chesterfield, an affluent, predomi- nantly White suburb with five times the population of Pine Lawn

(47,000) and a per capita income almost four times that of Pine Lawn (\$50,000).

If one can afford an attorney, they have all of the advantages. Typically, in the case of a speeding ticket, the attorney requests what is called “recommendation for dis- position.” In those cases a speeding ticket is amended to a non-moving violation, such as excessive vehicle noise, upon pay- ment of a fine and court costs. The offender is able to avoid points on his or her record as well as a pos- sible insurance increase. Poor people, however, don’t get that benefit.

“...in all but a very few, these municipalities fail to provide lawyers for those who cannot afford counsel,” the report stated. “As a result, unrepresented defen- dants often enter pleas of guilty without knowing that they have right to consult with a lawyer, although this information is on many court websites. Defendants are also sentenced to probation and to the payment of unreason- able fines without a knowing, voluntary, and intelligent waiver of defendant’s right to counsel. Despite their poverty, defendants are frequently ordered to pay fines that are frequently triple their monthly income.

“Defendants are entitled to a hearing to determine their ability to pay, under Missouri Law. Upon revocation of probation because of their inability to pay, defendants are again entitled to an inquiry into their ability to pay. Based on our observations, this rarely occurs. As a result, defendants are incarcerated for their poverty.”

Yes, race and money still mat- ters.