

EDITOR'S DESK

The right to vote shouldn't be taken for granted

On May 7, 1955, Reverend George Lee was shot and killed by an unidentified assailant while driving his car. Lee was the first Black resident of Humphreys County, Missouri, to register to vote, and after he registered he worked hard to register other Black residents to vote. He received death threats demanding he remove his name from the voters rolls and cease his activism, and historians believe his murder was in retaliation for his efforts.



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR

On Nov. 14, 1917, in an event dubbed the "Night of Terror," 33 women who had been arrested for peacefully protesting outside the White House for the right to vote were brought to the Occoquan Workhouse. Women there that night later described being beaten, pinched, thrown to the ground or choked as they were thrown into filthy, rat-infested cells.

On April 22, 2018, a suicide bomber at a voter registration site in Kabul, Afghanistan, killed more than 50 people waiting to register to vote. It wasn't the first time or the last time that polling places and registration events have been bombed in Afghanistan.

In Georgia (the state, not the Eastern European country), people voting early in the presidential election this month have had to stand in line for as long as 10 hours to do so.

I'm sure any of the people affected by these events would feel incredulous that someone who could simply fill out a ballot at home and drop it in



Dan Lonai, the Umatilla County director of administrative services, watches as ballots run through a counting machine at the Umatilla County Elections office in Pendleton on May 15, 2020.

their mailbox, without any legitimate fear of violent retribution, would not choose to do so. And yet thousands of eligible Umatilla and Morrow County voters do so each year.

I've talked to some of them. They say they don't feel confident they know enough about the candidates and issues to make the right decision, or they don't think their vote will count. Those are valid concerns. But fortunately those concerns are more easily dealt with in comparison with concerns about being beaten, killed or arrested.

To the first point, there are resources readily available to assist people in learning about candidates and measures.

Voters are sent a voter's guide, featuring statements submitted by candidates and people backing mea-

asures, discussing their accomplishments, values and who has endorsed them. Most candidates have websites or social media pages that can give you a feel for what is most important to them. Candidate forums — usually filmed and posted online for those who couldn't attend in person — allow for a less filtered look at the candidate's thoughts. And local newspapers and other news media act as watchdogs to help inform people of those things a candidate might wish stayed hidden.

Those sources of information may not be as enticing, but the cast of "Orange is the New Black" doesn't get to decide what your water rates are.

Some low-profile candidates — say, someone running for the board of your local cemetery district — are

pretty hard to find information on. But voters have an option of leaving some races blank while only voting on the races they do know about.

To the second point, that voters are concerned their votes won't count, I don't believe that's the case. I've covered local races that have come within five votes. You may not be the deciding factor on the next president, but then again, the 2000 presidential election came down to 537 votes in a recount in Florida, and I don't think anyone would be shocked to see a recount or Supreme Court decision involved again in this year's presidential election.

If you've filled out your ballot and returned it already, great. If you have received one but haven't returned it yet, please consider blocking out some time to consider the candidates and issues and vote in at least a few of the races. Ballots can be mailed back, no postage required, but remember that they must be received, not merely postmarked, by 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 3. You can also drop them off at secured drop boxes in front of city halls and county courthouses, including the one in the drive-thru outside the old Hermiston City Hall.

And if you're voting in this election but are part of the more than half of Umatilla County residents who skip the primary elections, consider voting during springtime elections too. Smaller numbers mean your vote holds more sway, and a strong primary turnout can help prevent a situation in the general election where no one is thrilled with either of their choices.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Maier has the skills to be commissioner

Here we are nearing Election Day and we have new developments in our county commissioner race. When Pat Maier told me she is doing a write-in campaign I was excited for Umatilla County, as I knew we now had a great choice of who to vote for!

I personally support Pat Maier for Umatilla County commissioner because she aligns most with what I believe Umatilla County needs compared to the other candidates.

Maier is a successful businesswoman, intelligent and will negotiate what's best for the county, not special interest groups. We need more successful business people involved in government, people that are used to spending their own money tend to be fiscally conservative and not willing to grow government. Maier is a level-headed problem solver that looks at all sides of an issue in order to make the best decision. She listens, asks questions and does the research to find solutions. Maier is pro-business and will work toward a business friendly environment for the entire county.

In the years I've known Pat, we've spoken many times about issues in the county and while we've not always seen eye to eye, I knew I could trust her judgment and we collaborated on many issues. I like the fact Maier is not beholden to anyone; I cannot say

the same thing of Dan Dorrان. I listened to Dorrان in several of the county charter review meetings I attended and was very disappointed he supported having a county manager and part-time commissioners. We don't need to change our county form of government and if Dorrان is elected, that's what he will work towards.

In my opinion Dorrان would be a liability to the county, having a recent arrest for DUII and an accident, during which thankfully no one was seriously injured. This shows poor judgment on his part.

I hope you join me and write-in Pat Maier for county commissioner. Let's hire a successful business person for the job, she is our best choice!

Suni Danforth
Milton-Freewater

Best councilors for the job

Dear voters, I attended the forum held at the Community Center in Hermiston where the candidates voiced their concerns and opinions on how to help and solve issues within our town and county. After listening and reading about the candidates, I highly recommend the ones that I believe are the best qualified and will lead with intelligence, skill, and compassion where necessary. They will represent all of the citizens of Hermiston and Umatilla County. For Umatilla County commissioner I recommend Dan Dorrان; for Hermiston City Coun-

cil, Rod Hardin, David McCarthy, Nancy Peterson, and Doug Primmer. We want the best and we deserve the best. Thank you.

Jackie Linton
Hermiston

Smith has true compassion

Our election ballots are on their way to our mailbox and we are waiting for our opportunity to cast our votes for Rep. Greg Smith. Greg has been a personal friend for many years but more importantly, he has been a friend to Eastern Oregon.

Living in a smaller town within his district, Greg knows and understands the issues facing rural Oregon. He understands the strengths and challenges of our communities. We continue to watch as he fights with honesty and common sense for Eastern Oregon.

Greg has a strong grasp of the greater Hermiston area and the economic development therein. He is a strong advocate and has the ability to continue the leadership necessary to help continue the growth and area development. Greg will continue to fight for our local communities and continue making a significant impact.

Greg Smith has true compassion for the residents of District 57 and a willingness to listen to people's problems, concerns and suggestions. He is a true leader giving careful thought to decisions he makes, and he is willing to share

those reasons. Often he is called upon to lead discussions and bring all sides into focus, coming out with a consensus of the whole — not an easy task.

Please join us in supporting Representative Greg Smith in his bid for reelection to the Oregon House of Representatives.

Bryan and Lou Ann Wolfe
Hermiston

Umatilla County needs Dorrان's leadership

I am strongly supporting the candidacy and election of Dan Dorrان for Umatilla County commissioner Position #3. Dan is a proven leader with a "can do" attitude with regard to many of the issues facing Umatilla County.

Umatilla County needs leadership that promotes collaboration and cooperation, which are two strengths that Dan brings to the table in any forum. This is critical in the governance of Umatilla County in relationship to its charter. Dan understands the importance of the county's economic development, whether it be in the areas of water infrastructure, the development of the Depot land, transportation infrastructure, and land use planning. His ability to listen, research and apply problem-solving skills is extremely needed in the position of Umatilla County commissioner in these unprecedented times. In working with Dan over the years I have

found Dan to be a person of integrity, honesty and one that will stand up for his beliefs.

My wife Anne and I have the greatest respect for Dan Dorrان and his wife Terry. They are grounded individuals that only have the best interest of Umatilla County. We encourage you to vote for Dan Dorrان for Umatilla County commissioner #3.

Larry Givens
Milton-Freewater

Educate yourself on issues

It is not about a person, it is about policy. It is not about a party, it is about a platform. It is time to be an informed voter!

Voting is a privilege, and with it comes responsibility. Study your candidates and the measures and find out what each person/measure really represents.

If you are passionate about individual rights, research. Is a pro-life stance your main concern? Find out which party/candidate supports your beliefs. Are tax and fiscal issues your focal point? Do your homework and vote for the position that most closely aligns with your point of view.

Please, Oregon voters, do your job and be an educated part of our constitutionally guaranteed right to participate in deciding the future ... of our town, county, state and country.

Karen Carlson
Hermiston

CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call (541) 564-4533 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Expanded death notices will be published at no charge. These include information about services. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at hermistonherald.com/obituaryform, by email to obits@hermistonherald.com, by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, x221.