

Teach Idaho's GOP a lesson; vote Republican

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You should have a say in who is going to represent you at the state and county level.

If you want a voice, voting Republican is the only practical way to help decide our next leaders. Contested races in the Idaho Democratic Party are about as rare as a vegetarian in a barbecue joint. For example, Canyon County has five legislative districts: 9 through 13. There are a total of 40 Republicans and 12 Democrats running for state Legislature, county commission or sheriff. But only one of those districts, District 12 Senate, has a contested Democratic primary. If you're a Democrat in any of the other districts, you, in effect, have no primary.

Because the Idaho Republican Party has closed its primary to anyone who doesn't register with the party, you have two choices: Stay at home on May 15 and be silenced, or make your documented party of preference a matter of public record. Of course, the ramifications of the latter choice could be unpleasant. It could get you into hot water with friends, family or co-workers when you have to tell them what you've previously preferred to keep private: how you vote. And what if you work in the news media and want to have a say in who represents you? Register with a political party and face the wrath of voters who question your objectivity. So much for the sacred privacy of the voting booth.

Just for the record, the Idaho Press-Tribune news staff is encouraged to vote. It's their right. The fact that someone may choose to see if a journalist votes blue or red simply doesn't matter. Because in reality there's really no other choice. Once through the primary, voters will have a choice in most November races. You won't have to pretend to be a Republican.

But in Canyon County, it's different. There are no Dems on the November ballots. In the sheriff's race there's an Independent running. But he's not what county residents are looking for. One of two men on the ballot and another write-in will likely be the next sheriff.

Do you care? Vote Republican. Don't like the way the county commissioners have operated in the past few years? You have a choice: two incumbents and two challengers, but only if you vote with the GOP.

There are some very good and worthy races in Senate and House legislative seats. Redistricting shook up the boundaries and voters have some excellent options, but you guessed it. They are Republicans. This isn't just whining from disgruntled liberals and wimpy moderates. Many Republicans - including conservative GOP candidates - aren't crazy about the system, implemented last year when the state party successfully sued Idaho Secretary of State Ben Ysursa for the right to close its primary. In fact, at a candidate forum Thursday at Nampa City Hall, nary a single Republican out of nine defended the closed primary as a good, reasonable method of keeping those devious RINOs (Republicans in Name Only) at bay. A few defended the party's right to run its primary as it chooses, but not a single one said closed primaries are great.

So if so many party members are lukewarm at best on the concept, why do we have it in the first place? Because, simply put, the Idaho Republican Party is too big and too powerful. The same people who profess to oppose tyranny have, wittingly or unwittingly, become masters of it.

In some states, where the balance of ideological power is razor-thin, it might make sense to close primaries. But Idaho has shown itself to be a consistently, heavily conservative state in most quarters, and any candidate with even a modicum of common sense knows if you want to win in most districts, you have to be a Republican. So it's not practical to lean back, kick your feet up on the couch and say, "well, the Democratic Party needs to recruit more candidates, then."

If you aren't registered yet, here's what we recommend: If you're a Democrat, vote Republican! If you're a Libertarian, vote Republican! If you're a moderate, vote Republican! If you're an independent, vote Republican! Send a message to the state GOP by signing the silly piece of paper and making your voice heard.

Still not convinced? Republicans even admit the closed primary could hurt voter turnout.

Then look what happens: A few people choose our next leaders. Not if we have anything to do with it. Maybe the party will come to its senses and open its primary again.

Until then, vote Republican!