



BONNEVILLE COUNTY

SMOOTH ELECTION IS NO ACCIDENT

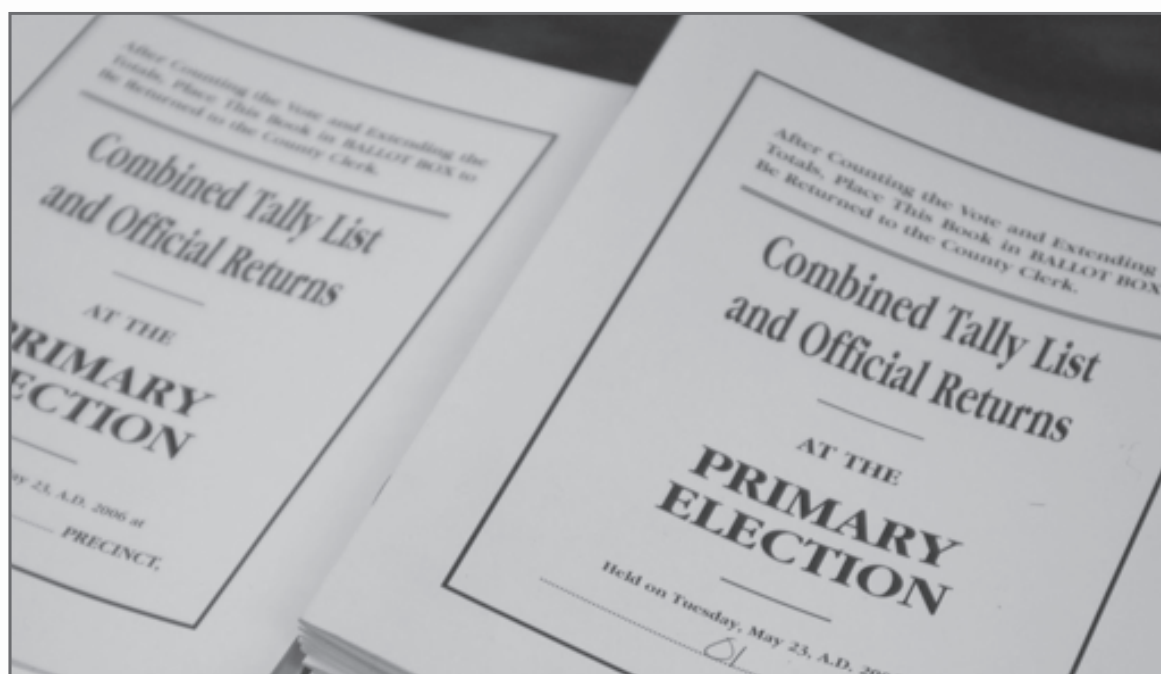
The beloved American humorist Will Rogers once said, “We can’t all be heroes because somebody has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by.”

Today, Bonneville County residents are sitting on the curb if you will, watching the great workers in the County Elections Office go by, feeling deep appreciation for a seldom noticed but crucially important job well done—again.

To a casual visitor the elections office seems quiet and orderly, revealing no clues about what just went on a few nights ago. Bobbie Jockumsen, the Chief Elections Clerk of Bonneville County, has nearly caught up on her sleep and is animated and enthusiastic about her responsibilities. After 20 years on the job, she seems to genuinely enjoy her work, and is obviously good at what she does. A sense of quiet order pervades the office.

Jockumsen is joined in the office by Brenda Prudent, a full-time assistant, Dawn Schwartzenberger, a 3/4-time assistant, and Kathy Ward and Kay Condie, both of whom are part-time workers. At election time, though, all become overtime workers.

As an election nears, these amazing public servants are joined by a host of others assuming the role of election judges. All are needed to carry out the election process. Election judges from each precinct pick up their voting booths and materials in the early morning so they can set up before the 8 AM opening time, then return them at night after the polls close. Others calibrate



Ensuring ballot access for all eligible citizens means vote counting can go well into the next day. While not all election nights last until 4 AM, the credibility of representative democracy centers around the professional administration of the electoral process.

machines, program computers, take ballots to shut-ins and keep the office open. Law enforcement officers pick up ballots and deliver them to the election office for counting. Jockumsen describes them all as “loyal and amazing.”

On election day the work seems endless, especially at 4 AM the next morning when Jockumsen can finally report the last numbers to the State and lock the door behind her. Election nights are not always this long, but the new auto-mark machines require input by hand, which slows the process. These machines, mandated by the Federal Government to aid the disabled, are a boon to the County. In spite of the additional time required to tabulate votes cast on the machines, they are evidence of Idaho’s commitment to provide all eligible citizens the opportunity to vote.

The Bonneville County Elections Office reviews every petition and maintains all voter lists from Bonneville County and those from the cities of Idaho Falls, Ammon and Iona with whom the County is contracted. But this mammoth workload

doesn’t compare with the feeling of responsibility the workers carry.

In a day and age where ‘values’ more often refer to economics than to elements of truth or integrity, the efforts of Bobbie Jockumsen and her staff serve as a credit to our nation’s heritage of freedom and democracy, and that’s why we’re sitting on the curb applauding them.



Chief Elections Clerk Bobbie Jockumsen heads a dedicated team whose preparation and professionalism is fundamental to a consistent and stable election process.

The Right to Vote—Freedom of Choice



Only 23% of registered voters in Bonneville County cast a ballot in the Primary Election May 23. State and local government policies will not reflect the needs of those who fail to exercise their right to vote.

Participation in the Right to Vote

Election day—May 23rd, 2006—brought with it a right that the majority of Americans take for granted, the right to vote.

This right identifies our nation as a democracy, but did not come gift-wrapped with the Declaration of Independence nor with the Constitution. Our predecessors fought many battles—some with weapons and some with words—to bring us this right.

Considering the sacrifices that have been made over the centuries to ensure and maintain our freedom of choice, one would expect Americans to rush happily to the polls to exercise this great freedom, so admired by other nations.

Twenty-three percent of all registered voters in Bonneville County went to the polls. Put in the specific number of 43,978 voters registered by the end of election day, and only 10,094 exercised their freedom.

Primary elections are notorious for their low turnouts, especially in an area such as Bonneville County where one political party dominates the other. Expectations are for a higher turnout in the general election in November, but one is forced to ask, what is it that motivates people to go to the polls? And what is lacking when people don’t?

Are the majority of citizens so pleased with state and local government that they support the status quo by not voting? Or, are people so overwhelmingly frustrated by the decisions made by our state and county office-holders that they have thrown up their hands in disgust?

Consider a third possibility. Perhaps few people are aware of what’s at stake by

not voting. Is it possible that the demands of everyday life are either so intense or so boring, that we are “zoned out” when it comes to the affairs of the day in Idaho, in Bonneville County, even perhaps in the nation? Are we so wrapped up in our individual lives or television sitcoms that choosing our government leaders just doesn’t seem to matter?

It is true that democracy is a lot of work. Winston Churchill reportedly thought it was the worst form of government there is, except for all the rest. And it does have a tendency to require making decisions whether we want to or not. Unfortunately, if democracy fails here, it fails everywhere; thus, we have a vested interest in making it work.

It is difficult to weigh the sacrifices of the many Americans, both citizens and soldiers, who have given their all to guarantee us the right to vote. At a minimum, we should all be willing to study the issues, meet the candidates, and stand in line to cast our votes as a sign of freedom, liberty, gratitude, and responsibility.