



PETER CALLAGHAN

So, remind me again why I need to 'Pick a Party'

Local elections officials expressed a lot of concern last week about how some voters were filling out their ballots.

Based on random checks of returned absentee ballots, many voters weren't checking a box under the "Pick a Party" heading.

Elections people theorize that voters are confused. They issued this warning: If you don't pick a party first, your votes in partisan elections will not be counted.

To which I respond: Big dang deal. There are so few contested races in either party primary that it is no surprise voters aren't doing it "correctly." They might be confused or they might be irate that federal courts let the parties hijack the primary.

Here's what should surprise elections officials: A lot of voters are actually choosing a party, even though the parties have left voters with no real choices. While nonpartisan judge races have created all sorts of competition, the partisan races for Congress, state Legislature and county offices are mostly choices of one.

Of the 20 congressional primaries (one Senate seat and nine congressional districts with a Republican primary and a Democratic primary each), only seven offer voters more than one candidate.

And I'm being generous by including the U.S. Senate primaries that are contested in name only. Any serious candidates who might have challenged incumbent Democrat Maria Cantwell or amounted Republican candidate Mike McGavick were pressured or enticed to drop out.

How about state legislative races? Of the 48 primaries for state Senate, just five offer voters a choice. Of the 196 state House primaries, 11 are contested.

It's even worse down ballot where none of the 10 Pierce County government primaries has more than one candidate. In the single King County government contest, Prosecutor Norm Maleng is unopposed.

By winning control of the primary, the parties have actually conspired to kill it. Soon, only party bosses will pick the candidates and voters will simply ratify those decisions.

Leaving out the nominally contested U.S. Senate races, here's what voters have to look forward to Tuesday:

**3rd Congressional District:** Two seek the GOP nomination.

**2nd Legislative District:** Democrats have one contested state House race.

**22nd:** No contested races.

**26th:** No contested races.

**26th:** Republicans have two contested state House primaries.

**29th:** No contested races.

**30th:** No contested races.

**31st:** No contested races.

**Thurston County:** Democrats have two contested races, for county commissioner and treasurer.

If it weren't for judge races, which voters can take part in *without* picking a party, there would be little reason to vote. No wonder, then, that a bunch of voters either refuse to "pick a party" or skip the partisan races altogether.

I'll end with something from the "serves you right" file.

One of the angriest Republicans and Democrats was when they sued the voters and challenged the old blanket primary was that one party could sabotage the other with crossover voting. Supported by anecdotes but no evidence, the parties claimed Democrats would cross over and vote for the weaker Republican candidate and vice versa.

They won in court, but what did they win? By assuring that their primaries are mostly uncontested, they create a perfect atmosphere for crossover.

For example, with nothing contested on their own primary ballot, why wouldn't Democrats cross over and try to nominate the weaker Republican candidate in the 26th District? And why wouldn't Republicans return the favor in the 2nd?

Other than the fact that they'd have to "pick a party" first.

Peter Callaghan: 253-597-8657  
peter.callaghan@thenewstribune.com

## New math textbooks in classes

More traditional Saxon Math materials hit Tacoma for start of school

The Tacoma district gets a new, more traditional supplemental math program into schools quicker than officials thought they could.

BY DEBBY ABE  
The News Tribune

Tacoma students won't have to wait for weeks to start using a new supplemental math textbook that officials hope will help boost the district's lagging math scores.

District officials originally thought it would take six weeks from the time the School Board approved the purchase Aug. 24 to receive Saxon Math textbooks and

materials for the district's estimated 51,000 kindergartners through 12th-graders.

However, the book's publisher, Harcourt, began trucking the books from Missouri on Aug. 25, and the books started arriving in Tacoma on Aug. 28.

After the board approval, the district scrambled to arrange teacher training on the week before the Sept. 6 start of school, said Sondra Bright, Tacoma's director of math and science curriculum and instruction.

Based on e-mail questions she's receiving from teachers, Bright said Friday that it appears many teachers have already begun using the books.

"They were so hungry for this," she said of the teachers' appetite for the new program. "We never imagined in our wildest dreams we'd get the trainers or books in place this early."

Though there was a rumor that the district had received the books before the board approved their purchase, The News Tribune determined it was unfounded, based on interviews and the textbook shipping forms.

The Saxon textbooks and materials cost \$1.6 million, which includes training. More training sessions are planned for this month and January. Tacoma's purchase of the Saxon curriculum is among

several steps the district is taking to boost its chronically low math scores.

The district is letting teachers and principals decide whether to use Saxon, a more traditional approach to math, in combination with the district's existing "integrated" math programs that emphasize understanding of the concepts behind math. Tacoma teachers also will monitor more closely students' math progress through new assessments given every six weeks to pinpoint topics in which students need more help.

Data from those and other assessments

Please see TEXTBOOKS, back page

### SOMETHING WILD, WACKY AND WOOLLY

## Kids get to taste rodeo dirt



Bursting out of the chute, Sam Loper, 6, of Milton, holds on for the ride of his young life Saturday afternoon at the Puyallup Fair's Mutton Bustin' competition. Sam's sheep ride ended quickly, but he was no worse for the wear. The new event is attracting crowds at this year's fair.

DEAN J. KOEPLER  
The News Tribune

Mutton Bustin' appears to be a hit. It's a new event at the Puyallup Fair that tries to imitate bull riding, but in a small way for young kids. Winners get a silver buckle.

BY ROB TUCKER  
The News Tribune

For most of the young children who competed Saturday afternoon, it was out the chute clinging to the back of a running, bucking sheep and then a soft landing in the dirt, where some got in their eyes.

So it was with Kalleigh Harris of Tacoma, age 6. But after she got up and used cleanup wipes to get some dirt off her arms, she responded with a quick "Yeah!" when asked if she'd ride again.

That brought a smile to the face of David Harris, her grandfather.

A few other children wowed the crowd of several hundred by staying on sheep longer in Mutton Bustin', a new event at the Puyallup Fair.

It has attracted crowds and has been a hit with the kids and adults.

"It's so unusual," said fair spokeswoman Karen LaFlamme. "It's captured the attention of our guests."

In each round, 25 to 35 kids wearing hockey

#### FAIR SCHEDULE

Today's special events and information on doing the Puyallup Fair. B7

helmets and padded vests, ages 6 and under, compete in riding sheep — weighing in at 150 to 170 pounds — in a mini-rodeo arena near the Green Gate at the fair.

The children try to stay on the sheep's back for at least six seconds. The winners of the competi-

Please see KIDS, page B7

## EARLY SUCCESSES, MORE TO DO FOR TACOMA POLICE GANG UNIT

Tacoma's police gang unit has been on the job since it was founded in late July. Officers have made arrests and seized guns and drugs, but gang activity persists.

BY STACEY MULICK  
The News Tribune

Nearly two months old, the Tacoma Police Department's full-time gang unit has made some headway in tempering the gang violence that flared across the city earlier this summer.

The seven-person unit has made contacts, picked up suspects and snatched guns and drugs since it hit the streets in late July, police officials said last week.

But work remains to be done.

The number of gang-related crimes and reports are higher than last year. Arrests also are up. Drive-by shootings continue, including one earlier this month after a Mount Tahoma High School football game.

"I've seen some improvement, but that doesn't mean it's going away," said police Lt. Bob Sheehan, who is continuing to work on it.

Here's a recap of the city's efforts this summer.

**The unit:** A full-time team was created in July when the City Council agreed to spend nearly \$500,000 after a spate of gang-related violence, including the killing of

Category	T-TOWN'S MEAN STREETS	
	Jan. 1-Aug. 27, 2005	Jan. 1-Aug. 27, 2006
Gang-related offenses	369	522
Arrests in gang-related incidents	120	195
All part-one crimes*	12,946	12,302

\* Murder, aggravated assault, robbery, rape, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft and arson  
Source: Tacoma Police Department

a young man outside a downtown all-ages club.

The unit is comprised of a sergeant and six officers. The team started working July 24 and is funded through Oct. 1.

So far, it has focused its efforts on parts of the East Side, South 47th and Oakes streets, the Hilltop, Wapato Hills Neighborhood Park, transit centers and other problem areas.

**The numbers:** In August, team members arrested 14 people on suspicion of felonies and 30 on suspicion of misdemeanors.

They also recovered seven stolen vehicles and confis-

Please see UNIT, page B7

#### A DAY OF WONDER. NOSTALGIA

## Stadium students remember past, celebrate future

Stadium's seen a lot, but never a gala event like this. From incoming freshmen to grads from the '20s, a crowd turns out to celebrate the renovated 100-year-old high school.

BY NIKI SULLIVAN  
The News Tribune

When Stadium High School opened in 1906, Teddy Roosevelt was president, Upton Sinclair released "The Jungle" and the Fisher Department Store opened in downtown Tacoma.

When Evelyn Farrell graduated, the fappers of the Roaring '20s were hitting their stride.

She loved watching sports there, and, while the 98-year-old remembered the underground pool fondly, she was never brave enough to sneak into the

Please see STADIUM, page B6

#### INSIDE

Contact Us ..... B2  
Obituaries ..... B4  
Lottery ..... B2  
You&Me ..... B3

#### MOUNTAIN DEW MOUNTAIN?

As state parks consider corporate sponsorship, some fear the worst. B2



#### TOYS FRAY, DEVOTION DOESN'T

Readers tell why they can't let go of their favorite childhood stuffed animals and dolls. YOU&ME. B3