

Opinion

Editorial: Keep nonpartisan boards free of partisan politics

The Josephine County Republican Party says it interviewed and carefully vetted each candidate that it is endorsing for the nonpartisan seats up for election on the boards of the Josephine Community Library District, the Grants Pass School District, the Three Rivers School District and Rogue Community College.

One of those candidates is Mike Pelfrey, who is running for a seat on the library board.

Pelfrey told KAJO-AM radio on April 19 that "there are people out there having to pay for a library card. If you're a Josephine County resident, you shouldn't have to pay for a library card. That should be a privilege that you have as a citizen."

Here, Pelfrey displays a lack of knowledge about how the library district is funded. People who live within the boundaries of the Josephine Community Library District pay taxes to fund the library. Pelfrey's plan would give people who don't pay those district taxes free access. In other words, socialism.

About the library foundation's current fundraising drive to build a state-of-the-art new Grants Pass branch, Pelfrey told KAJO that "the library we have in downtown Grants Pass is absolutely fine. ... I do not feel a new library right now is an appropriate agenda item."

The hundreds of donors who helped the library raise more than \$500,000 in less than four months would say otherwise. In fact, the library's solid governance and the foundation's ability to rally support for capital projects are a shining example of how to get things done without asking taxpayers to fork over more and more and more. It's quite a contrast when compared to the frequent dysfunction exhibited by the Josephine County Board of Commissioners and the Grants Pass City Council.

Beyond the library conversation, Pelfrey has demonstrated an ill-tempered combativeness that voters need to consider before casting their ballots. From May 1, 2021, to April 25 of this year — that's 725 days — Pelfrey sent 746 emails to the Grants Pass mayor and city councilors. An average of 1.03 emails a day, every day, for 725 straight days. A previous Daily Courier review of Pelfrey's emails to the city's elected officials show some were strewn with vulgarities.

This is what Pelfrey emailed to the mayor and city councilors on Feb. 18, 2022:

"Hey Mayor &CC, Have you sent crews out to clean up the human sh-- that you allow to be spread throughout our Community and Parks today? If not, why Not? Who is running this sh-- show you call Grants Pass? Get your lazy Asses up and go clean up our damn city."

Pelfrey has also been ejected from a City Council meeting.

If the Josephine County Republican Party is throwing its support behind a candidate who lacks understanding about how the library is funded, thinks the woefully outdated Grants Pass branch building is "absolutely fine," has a demonstrated history of inundating Grants Pass city officials with emails at the rate of more than one a day for two solid years, some of them rife with vulgarities, and has been ejected from a Grants Pass City Council meeting — what does that say about the GOP's other "interviewed and carefully vetted" candidates?

Another layer to this issue: Some local Republicans who are running for seats contested in this election have intentionally not sought an endorsement from the Josephine County GOP because they reject the divisive tone that currently emanates from party headquarters. An example: One of the county GOP's committee chairs complained on social media Saturday about "too many centrists in the party."



Turning these nonpartisan local board races into hyperpoliticized affairs will do so much more harm than good. Voters must be vigilant against manufactured crises, false narratives and toxic divisiveness. Keep the frenzied partisanship off our local boards.

Scott Stoddard
