

## Other views

## EDITOR'S NOTES

## Orland's growth has civic benefits

Orland is booming.

Longtime north state residents knew it was bound to happen, but most people expected it years, if not decades, ago. Instead, the city on Interstate 5 remained a sleepy town of farms and mom-and-pop businesses.

There's nothing wrong with that — unless you want to do things like hire more police officers, buy a new fire engine more often than every half-century, offer sports and recreation programs for children, keep roads in good shape and make the downtown look inviting.

That's easier to do when there's a growing tax base, but all of those travelers going up and down I-5 every day weren't stopping to contribute to it. Corning and Willows had stores, restaurants, truck stops and ho-

tels. Orland had precious little. Not anymore.

A huge Pilot truck stop just off I-5 opened earlier this year with four places to eat inside, including a Wendy's. It has had an immediate effect on the city's tax base, not to mention providing a 24-hour business where a person can find hot food after midnight.

All around that busy interchange with Highway 32, well-known chains keep popping up — Subway, Starbucks, Dutch Bros., Burger King, Taco Bell, Walgreens, CVS, Auto Zone.

Most of this development coincided with the arrival 4 ½ years ago of City Manager Pete Carr, who hails from the private sector and finds ways to say yes rather than say no. What's the saturation point on drive-through coffee shops or fast-food restaurants? That's for the free market to decide. If they want to come, let them come.

Carr shared some city spread-

sheets with me on a field trip Thursday. In the last six years, the city's share of sales tax receipts has doubled, from roughly \$750,000 to \$1.5 million.

That's without a full year of receipts from the Pilot, which Carr says is the city's largest sales tax producer by far. In addition, voters last month increased the city's sales tax by one-half of 1 percent.

Consequently, the pinch the city had been feeling for years is quickly becoming a mere muscle-memory ache.

It will get better. Just across from the truck stop, there's a roughly eight-acre piece of land where the only commercial activity was a strawberry stand. Soon there will be an 80-room La Quinta Inn and Suites opening there, along with a movie theater, a mini-bowling center and a restaurant or two. Chico developer Paul Farsai said several restaurants, including Deny's, have expressed an interest.

La Quinta will add significantly to the tax base. Willows does very well with its hotel tax because it has six hotels. Orland has one, the Orland Inn. La Quinta will be twice the size.

The La Quinta and the Pilot sit along what used to be called County Road HH. It has been renamed Commerce Lane. Get the message?

I'm sure there are some Orland residents who don't like the growth, who can live just fine without the chain stores and restaurants, who lament the effect on existing businesses.

But there's no doubt the city benefits. That's important in a place Carr calls a "full-service city" because it has its own recreation district, youth sports programs, library, parks, water company, sewer service, and fire and police departments. None is outsourced. All are funded by tax dollars.

"Orland has been low on the hog for decades," said Carr. "A

lot of our infrastructure has been wearing down and we're not keeping up with it."

As things like the sales and hotel taxes rise, and home-building continues is slow and steady recovery, the next order of business should be to spruce up and then promote the old downtown, so that restaurants like the Farwood and East Coast Foods, the taco truck El Grullense, and shops like the Rusty Wagon and Orland Art Center also benefit from those I-5 travelers.

After years of fending off growth, Orland is now embracing new businesses. The growth in the past five years far outpaces any I-5 town between Sacramento and Redding. It's amazing what a receptive city manager and city council can do for a community. And there's still room to grow.

Editor David Little's column appears each Sunday. Contact him at [dlittle@chicoer.com](mailto:dlittle@chicoer.com).



David Little

## Cartoonist's take



## ELECTIONS

## Nothing wrong with electoral vote system

Political mildness is scarce nowadays, so it has been pleasantly surprising that post-election denunciations of the Electoral College have been tepid.

This, even though the winner of the presidential election lost the popular vote by perhaps

2.8 million votes, more than five times the 537,179 votes by which Al Gore outpolled George W. Bush in 2000.

In California, where Democrats effortlessly harvest 55 electoral votes (more than one-fifth of 270), this year's presidential winner was never in doubt. There was no gubernatorial election to excite voters. And thanks to a "reform," whereby the top two finishers in a multi-party primary face off in the general election, the contest for the U.S. Senate seat was between two Democrats representing faintly variant flavors of liberalism. These factors depressed turnout in the state with one-eighth of the nation's population. If there had been more excitement, increased turnout in this heavily Democratic state might have pushed Hillary Clinton's nationwide popular vote margin over 3 million. And this still would not really matter.

Political hypochondriacs say, with more indignation than precision, that the nation's 58th presidential election was the fifth in which the winner lost the popular vote. In 1824, however, before the emergence of the party system, none of the four candidates received a majority of the electoral votes, and the House of Representatives chose John Quincy Adams even though Andrew Jackson won more popular votes — 38,149

more, although only about 350,000 of the approximately 4 million white males eligible to vote did so.

All four candidates had been together on the ballots in only six of the 24 states, and another six states, including the most populous, New York, had no elections — their legislatures picked the presidential electors.

In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes won the electoral vote even though Samuel J. Tilden won 254,694 more of the 8,411,618 popular votes cast. (With 51 percent, Tilden is the only presidential loser to win a majority of the popular vote.) In 1888, Benjamin Harrison won the electoral vote 233-168 even though President Grover Cleveland won the popular vote by 89,293 out of 11,395,083 votes cast. In both years, however, exuberant fraud on both sides probably involved more votes than the victory margins.

So, two of the five 21st-century elections (2000 and 2016) are the only clear and pertinent instances, since the emergence of the party system in 1828, of the winner of the popular vote losing the presidency. Two is 40 percent of five elections, which scandalizes only those who make a fetish of simpleminded majoritarianism.

Those who demand direct popular election of the president should be advised that this is what we have — in 51 jurisdictions (the states and the District of Columbia). And the electoral vote system quarantines electoral disputes.

Imagine the 1960 election under direct popular election: John Kennedy's popular vote margin over Richard Nixon was just 118,574. If all 68,838,219 popular votes had been poured into a single national bucket, there would have been powerful incentives to challenge the

results in many of the nation's 370,000 precincts.

Far from being an unchanged anachronism, frozen like a fly in 18th-century amber, the Electoral College has evolved, shaping and shaped by the party system.

American majorities are not spontaneous growths, like dandelions. They are built by a two-party system that assembles them in accordance with the Electoral College's distribution incentive for geographical breadth in a coalition of states.

So, the Electoral College shapes the character of majorities by helping to generate those that are neither geographically nor ideologically narrow, and that depict, more than the popular vote does, national decisiveness. In 1912, Woodrow Wilson won just 41.8 percent of the popular vote but conducted a strong presidency based on 81.9 percent of the electoral votes. Eighty years later, Bill Clinton won 43 percent of the popular vote but 68.8 percent of the electoral votes. In 2008, Barack Obama won 52.9 percent of the popular vote but 67.8 percent of the electoral vote.

The 48 elections since 1824 have produced 18 presidents that received less than 50 percent of the popular vote. The greatest of them, Abraham Lincoln, received 39.9 percent in 1860.

So, on Monday, when the electors cast their votes in their respective states, actually making Donald Trump the president-elect, remember: Do not blame the excellent electoral vote system for the 2016 choice that was the result of other, and seriously defective, aspects of America's political process.

George Will's syndicated column appears each Sunday.

## NEW ADMINISTRATION

## Welcome to Trump's Bizarro World Cabinet

By Clarence Page  
Tribune Content Agency

As low as my expectations might be for the Donald Trump presidency, he finds new ways to drop the bar even lower.

Take his Cabinet nominees. Please.

They aren't all bad. Retired Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis, the president-elect's choice for secretary of defense, comes well-recommended by old guard defense experts like Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and turns out to be nowhere near as nutty as his nickname implies.

And it's hard to dislike the bipartisan appeal of Gov. Nikki Haley (R-S.C.), although Trump's choice to name her U.N. ambassador is a puzzlement. She has little experience in foreign relations but she opposes President Barack Obama's Iran nuclear deal, so maybe that's good enough for Trump.

But some of Trump's other choices illustrate how dramatically an election can swing our government's executive branch into a Bizarro World version of its former self — like the fictional planet in DC comics where everything is the reverse of life on Earth.

This is particularly true when government appointees don't seem to care very much for government.

For secretary of labor, Trump wants Andrew Puzder, a fast-food executive with a negative attitude toward additional overtime pay for workers and raising the minimum wage.

To head the Environmental Protection Agency, Trump proposes Scott Pruitt, Oklahoma's attorney general, a climate-change skeptic, who is currently engaged in the latest in a series of lawsuits he's filed against the agency Trump would now like him to head.

And I can't leave out Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.). A tough critic of the Voting Rights Act,

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Trump has tapped him to be attorney general, a move that, aided by a Republican Congress, puts him in an excellent position to launch a Reconstruction-style collapse of civil rights enforcement with the enthusiasm of a fox guarding a henhouse.

Still, the prizewinner for puzzling choices may well be Trump's naming of Dr. Ben Carson, his former rival for the Grand Old Party's presidential nomination, to be secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Sure, Ben Carson is a nice guy with a great ghetto-to-Gold-Coast, pull-up-your-boostraps narrative. The retired neurosurgeon has been the subject of best-selling books and a made-for-TV movie, "Gifted Hands," starring Cuba Gooding Jr. as Dr. Ben.

But what does he know about housing and urban development policy? Well, he owns a house and grew up in Detroit. Fine. But driving a car does now make you an auto mechanic.

HUD doesn't need a brain surgeon. It needs people with good brains for housing and urban development. Carson's views on fighting poverty, expressed in his speeches and writings, leans heavily on quaint, old-fashioned, self-help values. Poverty, he once told a television interview in a much-replayed clip, "is really more of a choice than anything else."

That might be true for those of us who were born poor but fortunate enough to have resources at hand, such as a fully functional family and good schools. But what do you do for those who were not born so lucky?

Trump's urban "disaster" views sound frozen in the riot years of the '60s. Poverty fighters in both parties whom I have covered in recent decades have learned a lot of valuable lessons about what works and what doesn't in urban policy.

Sometimes the lessons have come with unintended consequences. For example, the demolition of Chicago's public housing high-rises restored peace to some violently troubled real estate. But it led to a dispersal of street gangs into some of the city's poorest neighborhoods — and one of the highest gun violence rates in the nation.

But there's enough good news in public-private partnerships, housing vouchers and other innovations to make many "inner-city" neighborhoods into oases of gentrification. To help those who have been left behind by these signs of urban hope, our nation needs wise leadership that doesn't require on-the-job training.

Leonard Pitts, our regular Sunday columnist, is on vacation.