

It's Election Season Again

...by Jason Todhunter

After producing my driver's license and signing in to vote this week, I took the two ballots into the rather small booth and started blackening in the small ovals adjacent to the candidates that I thought would best represent me and my family's interests at the federal, state and local level.

I felt pretty good about how voting, as I had spent some time looking into the candidates... until I got to the Supreme Court Justice # 4 candidates. The Supreme Court is a very important race in Montana and I hadn't taken the time to look into the two folks running; and there were lines of people waiting to vote. In my opinion the worst thing to do is guess, so thanks to modern technology and the fact that I had a "Huckleberry" in my pocket, I searched both candidates on the internet and made my decision. Thanks to the internet, I was able to choose the best candidate to represent my views. I finally exited the voting booth, and apologized to the folks who were waiting their turn. As I headed for the field I scolded myself on being lazy and uninformed while completing one of the most important duties of an American Citizen... VOTING!

Montana's 2010 primary election was June 8th and with 32.21% of registered voters in Montana casting their ballots the election is over. Wheatland County, where I reside was the highest voter turnout by county in Montana at 68.9 % of registered voters participating. Throughout the state I think the elections went fairly well, however, this is only the first quarter of a four quarter game! Mark your calendars for November 2, 2010 as that is the day for the General Election.

We had three MLA Members that were successful in winning their primary races, which is always exciting. In Senate District 1—Lincoln county—Chas Vincent won his primary race handily with a 73.24% majority against his opponent. At this time no one is opposing him in the general election, but a write in candidate has until September 24 to file a declaration of intent for the general election, so he may see an opponent yet.

Also in Lincoln County, in House District 1, Representative Jerry Bennett successfully ran unopposed in the primary (99.04%), but he will be facing an opponent in the general.

In House District 87—in the Bitterroot—Pat Connell won his primary race with a 54.23 % majority of the vote. Pat, like Chas, is currently unopposed in the general election. CONGRATULATIONS to these candidates! It means a lot when we have folks at the legislature who have earned their living in the logging/wood products industry and understand our issues.

Thanks to term limits we are going to be losing long time MLA Member and State Senator Kelly Gebhardt at the end of this year. Kelly has been a great legislator the last 8 years and was the Chairman of the Senate Natural Resources Committee last session where we spend a lot of our legislative effort. Kelly, a logger and owner of Gebhardt's Post Plant and Sawmill in Roundup, brought to the legislature a great knowledge of the logging and wood products industry as well as other small business concerns that affect our industry. Thanks for your public service Kelly, you will be greatly missed!

It seems like last session just got over and already Montana's 2011 legislative session is just six months away; only about four months until the General election on Nov 2nd. Make sure you have the time allotted that day to vote and, if not, make sure you fill out and send in an absentee ballot.

Look at some of the local, state and national races from the last election and the narrow margins that many of the candidates won/lost by. Look at how their public policy decisions can affect you, your family, your business, etc. EVERY VOTE COUNTS! Encourage your family and crewmembers to vote! I challenge each and every one of you to educate yourself on the candidates and issues on the ballot this November; be better informed than I was this week.

Until the Legislature starts in January, I will see you in the woods! **JT**