

Primary Elections Shouldn't Be Secondary Consideration

Independents Need to Vote Too – on Local Matters and to Shape Fall Choices

By Bob Barrett,

This year's primary elections are Tuesday, Aug 24. – almost two weeks before Labor Day. Crowded among late-summer vacations, back-to-school preparations and preseason football, they'll be easy to miss. Please don't.

First of all, you must decide a number of local matters. Peoria residents are being asked five ballot questions, the most significant of which is whether to approve an update of the city's General Plan. That is the primary policy document guiding growth and development in the city and its planning area.

The General Plan addresses issues such as land use, transportation, economic development, recreation and open space, water resources, housing and public facilities. It provides a framework for making decisions by describing long-term goals for the city's future, as well as policies to guide day-to-day decisions. Arizona law requires that the General Plan be approved by voters at least every 10 years. In the event that the revised plan is not approved, the existing plan will remain in effect.

A majority of seats on the City Council are up for a vote as well. There are multiple candidates in the Acacia District, while I am unopposed for re-election – as are Councilmembers Ron Aames in the Palo Verde District and Carlo Leone in the Pine District.

Beyond Peoria's borders, primary voters will select candidates for Congress, governor and the state Legislature.

Almost a third of Arizona's registered voters are independents, who are eligible to vote the party primary ballot of their choice. Why, you might ask, should I vote in the Democratic or Republican primary if I am an independent? That's a good question, one for which I think there are two answers: philosophical and practical. Philosophically, perhaps you shouldn't. But I believe we need to be practical given the challenges facing our state and our nation at the moment. The primaries determine our choice of candidates in the fall. If you haven't liked the choices you've been getting recently, it behooves you to take part in the nominating process.

A few weeks ago, Arizona voters chose practicality rather than ideology in approving Proposition 100, the three-year, 1-cent sales-tax increase proposed by Gov. Jan Brewer to help balance the state budget. That we had to vote on it at all points up the fact that our incumbent state legislators quite often make the opposite choice.

Bottom line: It might seem like the primaries don't matter, but your choices on the candidates and ballot questions can hit pretty close to home – in your neighborhood and in your wallet.

Bob Barrett is mayor of Peoria.