
A Voter Should Be A Resident Of Place

Should property owners or residents be voters?

The concept of property owners being voters is not new; it is a very old idea. Throughout the long-developing history of what we call democracy, having more wealth has meant having more power. In the past this was sanctified in laws that allowed only the propertied classes to vote. When that arrangement gave way, the vote in most industrial societies remained the privilege of men having control of their economies.

Today we find the elimination of the initial traditions of assigning higher weights to the votes of property owners, higher degree holders, those able to pass literacy tests, and men. These preference removals are in the direction of equalizing the power of all individuals. The current practice of universal adult franchise with “*one-person-one-vote-one-value*,” has to be looked upon as a symbolic declaration concerning the equality of power principle for all voters while they are destined to live together under a common government.

Political equality means more than the fact that everyone has an equal right to cast a ballot. It also means that every person's vote should count the same as every other person's vote; no one's vote should count more. The issue of political equality, in other words, implies that all persons have a right not just to participate, but to participate on an equal footing, regardless of race, color, creed, gender, nationality, or economic status. This latter consideration, economic status, was eloquently addressed by James Madison over 200 years ago, in *The Federalist Papers*, No. 57.

"Who are to be the electors of the federal representatives? Not the rich, more than the poor; not the learned more than the ignorant; not the haughty heirs of distinguished names, more than the humble sons of obscure and unpropitious fortune."

Owning Property Should Not Be A Criterion For Being A Voter

Why do the 1993 by-laws of the Josephine County Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC)¹ propose the premise that voters in citizen advisory committee (CAC) areas can be residents or property owners?



What are the inherent difficulties stemming from property ownership when non-residents of a CAC are eligible to elect CAC board members and be board members? A political equality problem can easily develop when a person who lives in, say, Grants Pass, Oregon, or New York City, but owning property in a county CAC, voting for and/or becoming an elected officer of the CAC. Another significant issue is the real possibility that an owner of land in a CAC area could legally give or sell shares of his property in a CAC area to “others” outside the community, and for these aliens to take over through local CAC elections.

For us the important issue is the relationship between local residency and community well-being. We believe local residency boosts loyalty for peoples’ places. It means that such difficult-to-quantify factors as community stability, cultural preservation, and civic pride enter the land use decision-making process along with the traditional measure of profitability from land ownership.

¹ Josephine County Ordinance No. 93-13.

Citizens Can Take Action

The concept for property owners voting is not consistent with U. S. citizens electing their president, citizens of Oregon electing their governor, nor citizens of Josephine County electing their county commissioners. A citizen is an inhabitant of a place, a member of a state, or nation.

Our specific interest is that only citizen residents in a CAC area be eligible to vote in CAC board elections or to serve as board members. The dominant Section C.1. of the Josephine County Citizen Involvement Plan (CIP)¹ identifies CAC boards as being elected by the verified residents of a CAC area. This section of the CIP is in conflict with Article III of the CIC’s by-laws, which identifies the voters as being either residents, or property owners.

We have recommended to the Josephine County Board of Commissioners that the conflict between the CIP and the CIC by-laws on membership standards of CAC voters and board members be resolved by removing the property owner criterion for voting.

***Outsiders Can Take Over
Local CACs***

How do you feel? If you agree with us please make your concern known to your neighbors and our county commissioners, consider changing your CAC’s by-laws, and/or become a co-sponsor of this issue paper.

Would you like to learn more about citizen involvement in land use planning? Contact an officer of the *Hugo Neighborhood*, and/or the *Murphy Neighborhood Association*.

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of information documents jointly published by the Murphy Neighborhood Association (*Murphy NA*) and the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect their rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision making. Murphy and Hugo are nonprofit associations composed of voluntary groups of citizens interested in the land use in their areas located in Josephine County, Oregon.

The *Murphy NA*'s land use mission is to promote the social welfare of the citizens of its area by working to promote citizen involvement, government accountability, and by preserving, protecting, and enhancing the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors.

The *Hugo Neighborhood* is interested in both the land use and history of the Hugo area. Its land use mission is to promote the social welfare of the citizens of the area by working to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and by preserving, protecting, and enhancing the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors.

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**Political Equality:
One-Person-One-
Vote-One-Value:
A Citizen Issue Paper**



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Murphy Neighborhood Association

&

**Hugo Neighborhood Association &
Historical Society**

Members of the CACNA Coalition