

Don't blame the poll workers

Dan Hammes/St. Maries Gazette-Record

We will not attempt to guess the winners in the May 15 primary election, but we can make one rock-solid prediction.

A lot of voters are going to be angry once they understand the new election rules.

For Idaho voters, this primary election is not like any other in recent history. For the first time, voters will be forced to declare their party affiliation before they can cast a ballot.

That's right. If you want to vote May 15, you must tell the poll worker to which party you belong. And don't make a mistake. If you select the wrong ballot you cannot exchange it, so be certain before you go to vote in which primary you want to vote.

There is good news.

For voters who jump between parties, or who would prefer not to claim either party, there is the option to say that you are not affiliated with either party.

But there is a catch.

If you want to vote in the Republican primary, you **MUST** declare as a Republican.

There is no similar requirement to vote in the Democratic primary. In fact, if you declare as a Republican, you can still vote in the Democratic primary. The Democrats, to their credit, opted to keep their primary election open to any and all voters who want to participate.

The Republican Party did not.

In what has to be one of the most absurd political maneuvers in recent state politics, a faction within the Republican Party filed a lawsuit against the state because Idaho allowed voters to decide which primary they would vote without first swearing allegiance to a particular party.

The Republicans who filed the lawsuit claimed that Democrats were voting in Republican primaries and just screwing up the works.

That's the absurd part.

Republicans don't simply enjoy a majority in the state of Idaho, politically speaking, Republicans own the state of Idaho.

In the last legislative session, exactly 20 of the 105 legislators were Democrats. Of the

seven elected state officials, ALL are Republicans. The Congressional delegation? Also all Republicans.

To argue that Democrats, a party unable to develop positions or candidates that appeal to voters, are somehow savvy enough to skew Republican elections on a large scale makes little sense.

No matter.

A group of Republicans, yammering about the primary election being a ♦ party process,' sued and won. There are worse things. But if the primary election is simply a ♦ party process,' then why are taxpayers paying for it?

(The real insult, of course, is that Republicans gladly accepted taxpayer money to pay their legal fees after winning the lawsuit.)

In the end, some voters are going to be a bit miffed when they learn about the new process. We hope that doesn't cause too many problems. We also hope voters who are unhappy about the ♦ new' Idaho primary remember one thing - don't blame the poll workers.