

# **GOP thrives at local level in California**

**By Mark Z. Barabak, Los Angeles Times**

OAKLEY – Randy Pope is a conservative-tinged libertarian with a strong aversion to big government and the nanny state he sees “growing, growing, growing.”

“I can’t choose which toilet I want to put in my house. I can’t choose which light bulb I want to illuminate my living room,” he says, ticking off the outrages on his meaty fingers. “I can’t choose which shower head I’m going to use when I’m bathing.”

Pope is a city councilman in this Democratic-leaning suburb on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and if that seems unusual given his rightward bent, he is not alone. Four of the five Oakley council members are registered Republicans, like Pope, elected the same day that voters overwhelmingly backed Democrats Jerry Brown and Barack Obama and approved Proposition 30, the state tax hike initiative.

Over the last two decades, California has become a Democratic fortress, beyond the GOP’s reach in presidential campaigns and all but hopeless in statewide contests. Republicans are largely irrelevant in Sacramento, where the most important fights are between liberal and more moderate Democrats.

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