Alpine County bucks trend with nearly 70% voting

By Seema Mehta, Los Angeles Times

MARKLEEVILLE — Tess Castle, drinking a mid-afternoon pint at the Wolf Creek Restaurant & Bar on a recent afternoon, admitted something she had never told anyone before: She doesn't vote.

"Shame on you. I didn't know that," said bartender Danea McAvoy, 51, after selling lottery tickets to tourists passing through this bucolic town of 210 residents. "Shame on you."

There is more wilderness than people in Alpine County. Photo/LTN

The reaction may seem sharp, but it's because Castle, 28, is in a distinct minority in this picturesque county seat of tiny Alpine County.

Nearly everyone in this community makes their mark on election day. On June 3, in one of the least compelling gubernatorial primary elections in memory, nearly 70 percent of voters cast ballots, the largest turnout per capita in the state.

California as a whole is on track to hit a record of a more dubious nature — 18.3 percent of voters cast ballots through

election day on June 3. Absentee and provisional ballots are still being counted, but voting experts expect the state to end up with a turnout of 22 percent to 23 percent — far less than any in recent history — when the tally is finalized in early July.

That's a roughly 10-point drop from the last gubernatorial primary, part of a long-term trend in California, where fewer voters are casting ballots in primary elections as more choose not to affiliate with a political party.

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