



You Can Vote to Save Oscar Island

A Modern-Day Political Parable

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Imagine you're a college student assigned to write an impartial report about conditions on Oscar Island, which is part of a chain of Pacific Islands. About 4.5 million people live on this beautiful Island. Many Oscar-ians comment that their daily life is most people's dream vacation. Oscar is a medium-sized Island in the chain, with about 67% of the population concentrated in and around a port city, euphemistically named Progress Town. Imagine you have superpowers enabling you to travel invisibly. You can listen in on any conversation. You have instant access to the information needed to write your paper.

You discover that Oscar Island has two political parties: Alpha and Bravo. The Bravo Party has been dominating the Island for over 40 years. Alpha and Bravo have markedly different perspectives. In short, Islanders who identify as Alphas basically feel that preserving individual rights, responsibilities and local control is the best strategy for a good Island life. Islanders who identify as Bravos are convinced that a centralized, powerful Island government directing all aspects of Island life is the best way to control the future of the Island. Interestingly, this second perspective is strongly held among the 45,000 people employed by Island government, most of which are Bravos.

You learn that, up until 1984, Oscar was the most Alpha and conservative Island in its part of the ocean. Even now, only 32.83% percent of Oscar Islanders identify as Bravos, yet Bravos exert virtually 100% control, with much of the Bravo policies driven by Progress Town.

Regardless of whether you personally lean toward Alpha or Bravo perspectives, you decide to simply examine some of the data readily available to you. You start with education; and are disturbed to learn that Oscar Island ranks at the bottom of the Island chain. You speculate this must have something to do with money, until you discover that the two Islands ranked #1 and #2 educationally have the same per-capita educational budget as Oscar Island. You wonder why the \$9 billion being spent annually for "education" on Oscar Island is not producing better results. If centralizing educational control with the 500-600 Oscar Department of Education bureaucrats – paid \$42 million per year - is the Bravo answer, why isn't it working?

Turning to health and welfare, you discover beautiful Oscar Island ranks among the very worst in terms of mental health, addiction and homelessness. Surely this is due to a shortage of funding, you think. Then you find that the Oscar Health Authority employs 5,000 people and has an annual budget of \$16.5 billion. Puzzling. If centralized control is such a good idea, why are so many Oscar Islanders suffering and dying?

You discover Oscar's property crime rate is more than double the Island Chain average, with the worst of crime centered in Progress Town. You find crumbling infrastructure, a broken criminal justice system, a childcare desert, tragically deficient foster care and unaffordable housing. Perhaps a lack of funds? Then you discover that Oscar Island's annual budget of \$56 billion is 1.5 to 5 times higher per-capita than the

surrounding Islands. It's easy to see where the Island money comes from; taxes on Oscar are among the highest of all Islands. You're confused. Where's all that money going?

Your research paper ends up with more questions than answers. Why does Oscar rank so terribly in education, public health, and public safety? Where does all the tax money go...and why? Finally, why do Oscar Islanders keep voting for the Bravos who've been in charge while conditions continually worsen?

Based on the data, your commonsense conclusion is: "Bravos are failing the Island and betraying its residents. Pouring more time and money into pursuing their failed approach is foolish."

Therefore, "A change of Oscar leadership is in order." If you truly love Oscar Island, you can vote to save it. Will you?

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