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Missing ballots, lawsuits and strange packages fuel Simi neighborhood strife



Photos by Karen Quincy Loberg / Star staff

Michelle Riding, left, and Cynthia Shaheen ride horses in the Bridle Path area of Simi Valley recently. The Miller family's cows, part of 4-H projects by daughter Heidi, top, and others, have triggered a community dispute.

Cow quagmire unbridles a nasty homeowner war

By Anna Bakalis
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Mayor Paul Miller had been reluctant to engage in a bitter neighborhood dispute in his Bridle Path community of Simi Valley.

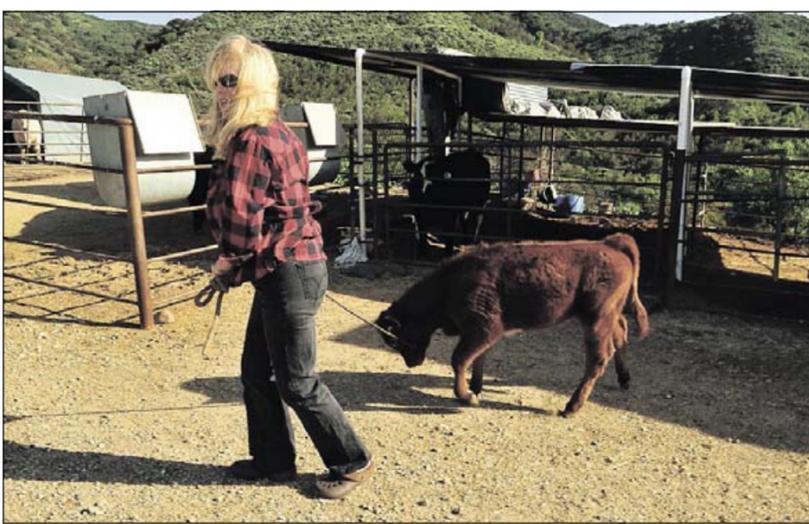
But that changed last week when he found out his vote wasn't counted in the March 15 election for the homeowners association's board of directors.

"Something is very wrong," Miller said. "I think this election needs to be re-done."

He and his wife were among at least 75 residents who learned their mailed-in ballots were not among the 437 counted, according to a list released by an independent elections inspector for the HOA.

The community is touted on its Web site as an idyllic equestrian community of about 630 homes in southwest Simi Valley, each on a half-acre or more, but residents have been hammered by HOA political tension that has included negative campaign fliers, door-to-door soliciting from candidates and lawsuits challenging board elections.

The topper was a FedEx delivery — cow patties nestled in happy face boxes with a knife and fork — sent last spring to four of the five Bridle Path HOA board members.



Margaret Miller and her husband, Randy, got permission from the Simi Valley City Council to keep cows on their Bridle Path property.

Since then, four board members have resigned for various reasons, and replacements had to be appointed to the volunteer positions.

At the center of this community rift are

Randy and Margaret Miller, who fought to keep eight cows on their secluded ranch-style property just off Meander Drive. A

See **BRIDLE PATH** on **A2**

Obama signs health reform

Historic victory may define his presidency

By Jennifer Loven
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Claiming a historic triumph that could define his presidency, a jubilant Barack Obama signed a massive, nearly \$1 trillion healthcare overhaul Tuesday that will for the first time cement insurance coverage as the right of every U.S. citizen and begin to reshape the way virtually all Americans receive and pay for treatment.

After more than a year of hyperpartisan struggle — and numerous near-death moments for the measure — Obama declared "a new season in America" as he sealed a victory denied to a line of presidents stretching back more than half a century. Democratic lawmakers cheered him on, giving the White House signing ceremony a rallylike atmosphere as they shouted and snapped photos with pocket cameras and cell phones.

Not everyone was cheering. The Democrats pushed the bill through Congress without GOP support, and the Republicans said Tuesday that those Democratic lawmakers would pay dearly in this November's elections. Opinion polls

See **HEALTHCARE** on **A6**



Anthony Plascencia / Star staff

The California Department of Fish and Game has temporarily stopped stocking trout at many lakes.

4 county lakes won't get trout as state halts stocking fish

By Zeke Barlow
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There are a lot fewer trout in the lakes around the state these days, and it's not because fishermen are landing trout in record numbers.

The California Department of Fish and Game has stopped stocking rainbow trout in a number of lakes from Ventura County to the Sierra Nevada as it tries to figure out what kind of impact the fish are having on populations of toads, frogs, steelhead trout and other native species. The dilemma started when environmental groups sued the state, claiming it had no idea what impact the stocking had.

The process threatens to postpone season openers around the state, and the stocking programs may be delayed for months as Fish and Game goes through the process of analyzing the

See **TROUT** on **A2**

INSIDE TODAY'S STAR

Chinese countermeasures

Google's efforts to detour China censorship partially blocked by authorities. **BUSINESS, A8**



Sheriff candidate dismisses criticism

Dean reacts to comments by a former secretary involved in his 2008 demotion at the Sheriff's Department. **LOCAL, B1**

Shooting suspect charged

Steven Honma of Westlake Village has been charged with art teacher's slaying. **LOCAL, B1**

Freshman keys La Reina win

Pitcher Dani Marietta helps La Reina hold off St. Bonaventure in TVL softball. **SPORTS, C1**



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