

Candidates seek closure in runoff election for County Supervisor

October 9, 2020



Incumbent Lori Cowan and challenger Valerie Starkey are in a runoff election for Del Norte County Supervisor District 2 because neither garnered more than 50 percent of the vote in the March primary.

We asked both candidates the same four questions to help voters decide how to cast their ballot in the Nov. 3 election.

First, introduce yourself to the voters.

Cowan: My family and I have lived in Del Norte County for over 18 years. I have worked in Real Estate for the past 12 years. My husband and I have raised our children in this community and now we are watching our two grandchildren grow up here.

Starkey: My family moved to Del Norte County in 1974 after my father transferred as a California Highway Patrolman. I graduated Del Norte High School in 1985, afterwards moving to Sonoma County to attend college. I worked for the Sonoma County Probation Department for close to 30 years, retiring in 2015 as a probation officer. I have an amazing son, Nick, who I raised with his father, Richard. After retirement, I returned home, to the community I love.

Why are you running for County Supervisor (or running again)?

Cowan: I am seeking re-election because I love Del Norte County and I love what I do. I deserve an opportunity to continue working for our community in order to see numerous projects come to fruition and with the support of my constituents, I will be able to keep things moving forward.

Starkey: I am running for County Supervisor because Del Norte County deserve a strong, committed leader who will serve District 2 with respect, integrity and honesty. As a probation officer, I developed a skill set to face tough issues with a cool head and a deep respect for humanity. Based on my training, I am able to listen to all sides of an issue before providing a practical solution.

What are your top three issues facing the county?

Cowan: 1. Homelessness: Since 2016, I have been working directly with Senator McGuire in addressing solutions for our homeless community within Del Norte County. There are wonderful things that are currently happening to help address both short term and long term needs in our community. We have been working to determine what the best “fit” is for our community, whether that would be permanent supportive housing, interim to permanent housing or development of an emergency shelter. I have been working with Del Norte Mission Possible, to not only implement a Community Homeless Shower program but also a 24-hour Homeless Shelter. The County has also recently been awarded funding for “Homekey” which is funding to purchase and rehabilitate hotels/motels into permanent- long term housing which will create 30 permanent housing units within our community.

2. Last Chance Grade: As everyone knows, Last Chance is the main artery within Del Norte County. I have been an active voice and an ongoing presence in not only Sacramento but also Washington, D.C. to make certain that Last Chance Grade remains the focus allowing us to continue to move forward to obtain the funding necessary to keep this project moving forward.

Starkey: I have more than three issues I will make my top priorities if I am fortunate enough to be elected for a seat on the Board of Supervisors. Frankly, I believe that my top issues will rotate regularly to reflect the needs of the residents in District 2. The bottom line is the residents’ top issues will become my top issues, no matter how small or how complex. We must focus on the issues that affect the largest percentage of our community and work in service to our entire community, rather than on issues that affect less than 1% of the population of Del Norte county.

But in addition to the residents’ concerns, and given my career experience, I lean toward wanting to provide more opportunities for youth and looking for solutions to keep our elderly protected and in their homes for as long as possible. I am also a strong advocate for our at “risk populations” and feel robust programming and services are essential. I believe seeking alternatives which will apply best practices that are not only effective, but cost saving as well. And, of course, transportation (Last Chance Grade and Highway 199) should stay on every Supervisor’s front burner.

Why should voters support or oppose Measure R to raise the sales tax within county limits by 1 cent?

Cowan: Residents of unincorporated Del Norte County should support Measure R as it will provide a safer future for Del Norte County. Measure R will allow the County to continue to fund important county services by providing support for law enforcement, maintaining emergency dispatch services for fire, ambulance and law enforcement, maintaining jail and criminal justice programs and also addressing repair of potholes and streets in Del Norte County. Measure R provides a prudent plan to help address the County's most critical needs for which no other funding exists to meet these growing needs.

Starkey: Voting for a tax increase is a personal decision for voters to make. I agreed with the Board of Supervisors when they voted to place the measure on the ballot, leaving it up to the people who it directly affects to decide. I am in support of Measure R, not because I believe in raising taxes, but I want to make sure that our residents have the necessary services to keep them safe and healthy. If the voters decline the increase, then as elected officials, we will need to figure out ways to provide the best services with the revenue available, cutting all unnecessary spending. Should the voters agree to the tax increase, I will still insist that all unnecessary spending be eliminated and that the oversight committee has all the information they need to provide the public with regular, accurate reports regarding spending.