
Coastal Voices: Presidential candidates must release tax returns

May 25, 2019

On May 13, the Del Norte County Democratic Central Committee voted unanimously to support SB 27, the Presidential Tax Transparency and Accountability Act. We want to thank our Sen. Mike McGuire for his leadership on this issue.

SB 27 would “require a candidate for President, in order to have the candidate’s name placed on a primary ballot, to file the candidate’s income tax returns for the 5 most recent years.” If this legislation is passed and signed, it will go into effect for the California presidential primary election on March 3, 2020.

Contrary to statements made in a recent letter from Roger Gitlin, this new law will not disenfranchise voters or candidates. This law does not deny the right of any single candidate to be on the ballot in California. This law does not discriminate against any one party or candidate. All candidates must equally follow the law.

For 40 years, there has been a bipartisan tradition that presidential candidates provide full disclosure of financial information, including tax returns. This legislation is being proposed in response to a willful disregard for this tradition.

It is no secret that the only presidential candidate who has been steadfastly resistant to releasing his tax returns is our current president. It is clear from Gitlin’s overreaction who is his favored candidate and it seems that his concern is based on the presumption his candidate would not comply with these new rules once they are passed.

Following is a summary of the findings in this legislation, provided as justification for these new rules for presidential candidates:

— “The state has a strong interest in ensuring that voters make informed, educated choices in the voting booth and has mandated that extensive amounts of information be provided to voters.”

— “Income tax returns provide voters with essential information regarding the candidate’s potential conflicts of interest, business dealings, financial status and charitable donations, thereby helping voters to make a more informed decision.”

— “The State of California has a special interest in the President refraining from corrupt or self-enriching behaviors while in office.”

— “The people of California can better estimate the risks of any given candidate engaging in corruption or the appearance of corruption if they have access to candidate’s tax returns.”

These are all rational reasons to support this legislation.

SB 27 is endorsed by California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, has been passed by the Senate and has been introduced in the Assembly. We have good reason to believe that SB 27 will pass the Assembly and expect that our new governor will sign it. We appreciate McGuire bringing forward this creative and fair solution to achieve greater transparency in our elections.

McGuire has represented this community well and he should be applauded for his efforts. He has helped to bring funding to fix Last Chance Grade. He has committed to help us find solutions to our local affordable housing and homeless issue. McGuire is always there when we need him.

Once again, McGuire is providing a service to our state and our community by advocating that more information be provided to voters, so that we can make educated decisions when voting in our next election.

The majority of Americans believe that all presidential candidates should provide their tax returns. SB 27 will require that they all do.

Kevin Hendrick is chairman of the Del Norte County Democratic Central Committee.