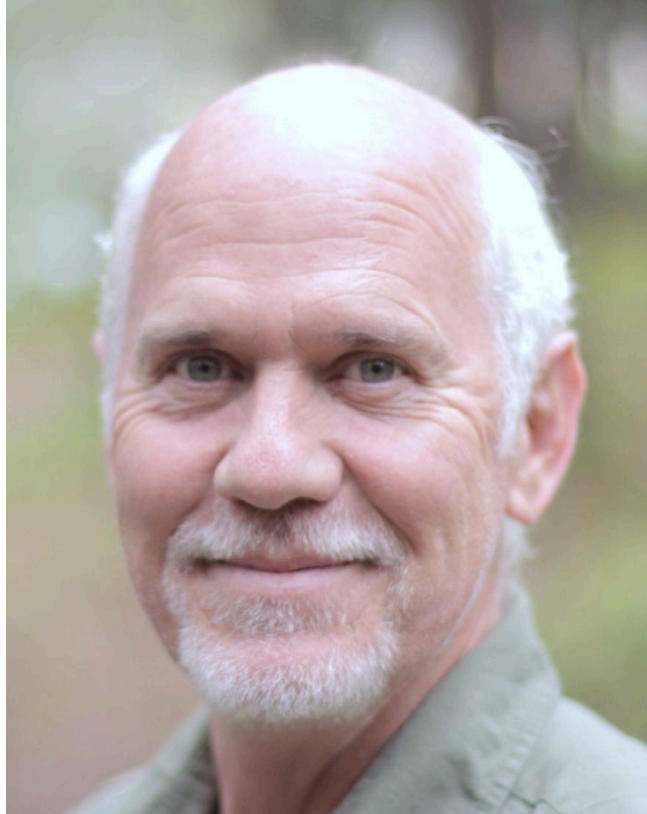

In My View: Waiting is the hardest part

March 30, 2024



As I am writing this it has been two weeks since the election on March 5th and we still don't have the final results on all the races. Everyone would like election results on election night, but that is just not possible. On election night we get results from our 19 polling locations and some of the ballots that were dropped off.

Only half of all local votes cast were counted on election day. Our registrar of voters, her staff and volunteers do a good job in tabulating the votes, but California allows a lot of time for mailed ballots to be received. They must count every ballot that is postmarked on election day and received a week later.

The process of counting ballots in California is designed to be inclusive. Every vote counts and every vote must be counted. There is no nefarious conspiracy to manipulate the vote count. This is not evidence of voter fraud. I trust our elections and would rather the vote count be accurate than fast. Waiting is the hardest part.

Local Votes Matter

Local votes matter the most for local races like County Supervisor. Though it was clear on election night that Valerie Starkey won reelection as 2nd District Supervisor, the 5th District Supervisor contest was too close to call. Dean Wilson had only a few votes over the 50% he needed to avoid a runoff with Heather Polen.

The final unofficial report for the vote count in Del Norte has Dean Wilson with just 21 votes over 50%. For all practical purposes, this election is now over, and we all should accept the results. This underscores the point that every vote matters. If Heather Polen had gotten 22 more votes she would be in a runoff in November.

There were plenty of votes left on the table. Fewer than 42% of the eligible voters in Del Norte County returned their ballots. Out of a total of 14,743 registered voters in our county, about 8,600 did not bother to vote. In the 5th District, 1,143 voters decided who will represent them as their County Supervisor.

Red In Blue

Del Norte County is a red county in a blue state and our vote totals for non-local races are often out of step with the rest of the State. While Democratic candidates have a difficult time winning in Del Norte County, in our district and statewide races the Democrats usually win.

For example, Republican Senate candidate Steve Garvey had the highest vote total in Del Norte County with nearly twice as many votes as Adam Schiff. Statewide three Democratic candidates split the Democrat vote. In the November General election Adam Schiff is almost certain to win and will be our next U.S. Senator.

In our Assembly District race, six Democrats split the Democrat vote and local Republican Mike Greer received the most votes with 27.5%. However, in the General election when all the Democrat votes are concentrated on one Democratic candidate it is unlikely that Greer will win. Still I respect his audacity to run.

Undecided Race

By the time you read this we may know the answer, but as of March 19th the second place in the Assembly race was still too close to call. With 30,000 votes yet to be counted in Assembly District 2, Rusty Hicks trails Chris Rogers by 2,551 votes. Whoever ultimately prevails will face Greer in November.

Rusty Hicks got more votes in the northern counties, and he got the most votes of the six Democrats in Del Norte County. However, Chris Rogers is dominating the votes from the south. Over half the voters in the 2nd Assembly District are in Sonoma County and Rogers is a well-known Santa Rosa City Councilmember.

This same voter imbalance also created a headwind for Frankie Myers who ran an honorable campaign. Along with many others I value his leadership and accomplishments. My biggest disappointment came from

Ariel Kelly and her sister who formed a PAC which spent thousands on a campaign to unfairly smear Rusty Hicks.

Looking Forward

However an election turns out, it is vital that we accept the results. President Biden said in his State of the Union address, “You can’t only love your country when you win.” I hate to lose an election if I am helping a candidate, but when the election is over, we all must find a way to work together.

Now it’s time to look forward to the General Election when more local races will be decided. In November we will elect three City Council members, three Harbor Commissioners, two School Board members, two Healthcare District members, three Library Board members and many special district board members.

The Del Norte County Democratic Party is seeking candidates that are interested in serving our community in these elected positions and will be initiating outreach soon to help identify people who are qualified and interested in running for local office. If you or someone you know is interested in running, please contact me.

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