

Eye on Del Norte: Del Norte mid-terms on the eve of the election

November 7, 2022



The 2022 Del Norte mid-term elections will soon be history. Poll voters and folks who've been pondering their ballots will respond by Tuesday and that will be that.

To date, about 19 percent of 15,247 ballots haven been returned. Quite literally, thousands of ballots may be returned at any precinct or the Clerk's Office at the Flynn Center. Official tabulation of ballots begins Monday afternoon. For those who've yet to return your ballots, I direct this commentary to you.

The past election cycle certainly has had its drama, disappointing for some, deliriously happy for others. One need not be reminded how important every vote is, especially for the many local candidates running for office.

Unfortunately, some of our candidates took the shortcut and sacrificed candor for misstatements in an effort to woo your vote. If you choose to ignore skeptical behavior in "... the ends justify the means" mindset and excuse or ignore questionable tactics, there's nothing I could say to enlighten your prejudiced thinking.

Fifth District appointed Supervisor Susan Masten has displayed questionable ethics during this campaign.

Masten misrepresented an opinion from a Sheriff's employee supporter by running both a broadcast and print ad claiming endorsement from the Del Norte Sheriff Employee Association. Despite a Letter of Disassociation from the DNSEA, candidate Masten continued to run this faux endorsement in the newspaper. Radio ads were pulled after the Letter was sent from the Association to the media outlets. No vote was ever taken, no retraction was ever broadcast or printed. Each candidate signs a Pledge to conduct their campaign with the highest level of ethical conduct. Candidate Masten signed that Pledge.

In what appears to be a clear case of Quid Pro Quo, candidate Masten was appointed Del Norte supervisor by Gov. Gavin Newsom, after she and her husband sold their Steelhead Lodge in Klamath Glen to the Yurok Tribe, which was provided the funds from State Sen. Mike McGuire's Operation Homekey. Klamath Glen has zero grocery stores, zero medical and psychological services and its remote location makes the site a poor choice for McGuire's ill-thought out Operation Homekey. Newsom has placed his thumb on the scale unfairly and unnecessarily and interfered with the election process.

EYE ON DEL NORTE recommends three-term Del Norte Sheriff Dean Wilson for District Five supervisor.

The Tri-Agency debacle occurred last week:

Though not per se an election issue, several candidates for Office were directly involved in deciding how to pay off a \$160,000 Tri-Agency delinquent debt payable to the United States Department of Agriculture. Ultimately, the Harbor District, on a 5-0 vote, offered to pony up \$40,000 added to the City and County \$60,000 each to satisfy the long-delinquent debt. Harbor commissioners either just plain forgot or displayed complete ignorance when it failed to rescind its \$25,000 over five years settlement commissioners proffered this past June. Technically, the Harbor District has now committed \$65,000 to the USDA, \$40,000 now and \$25,000 over the next 60 months. Harbor Commissioner candidates Rick Shepherd and Gerhard Weber are part of the unanimous vote for this palpable error.

After applauding this debacle. Harbor candidate Kevin Hendrick exuded his foolish enthusiasm by the squandering of public monies. Candidate Hendrick crowed about his financial experience in "...helping the Harbor negotiate the perilous waters into the future." The former director of the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority was dismissed from his position after \$25,000 in DNSWMA cash went missing in 2014. Hendrick took full responsibility for the loss which he attributed to "accounting discrepancies," another less than honest statement. The \$25K has never been accounted for. These awkward factual statements are not libel (or slander) but brought to voter attention so you may be better informed when you drop off your ballot.

The District Four race for Supervisor pits Excavation contractor Joey Borges against realtor Patty Adams.

EYE ON DEL NORTE recommends Joey Borges for District Four. Borges is focused and clear on his positions and has earned our support.

Measures T and U:

In an effort to bring clarity to this gargantuan jump in the General Sales Tax, EYE ON DEL NORTE cautions the voter: YES means NO. A YES vote repeals the 13.5 percent tax increase passed by voters in 2020 from 8.25 to 7.25 percent. T is the City measure, U is the County Measure.

EYE ON DEL NORTE recommends a NO vote on Measure T and a YES vote on Measure U. The 2.4 square mile City has made a credible case to retain the current tax; the County failed to make its case allocating 50% of proceeds to vague and opaque infrastructure needs.

It's your turn, now. Drop your ballots off now or plan to visit with the lovely poll workers at your local precinct.