
A tale of two parties in Del Norte

By Kevin Hendrick: In My View September 17, 2026

The Del Norte County Republican Party and the Del Norte County Democratic Party both organized parties recently that provide a good comparison of the different philosophical approaches each party follows to achieve a political outcome. This is a tale of two parties.

Last Saturday the Del Norte County Republicans held their annual fundraising dinner and were charging \$100 per person to attend. It seems elitist when only party insiders and wealthy donors can participate. Many people in this county can't afford to pay \$100 for the privilege of meeting Republican candidates.

In contrast, the Del Norte Democrats sponsored a Free Labor Day BBQ on September 5, at Beachfront Park. We were blessed with a beautiful sunny day and over 100 people came. This event was literally open to anyone at no cost. A few notable local Republicans and former Republicans attended.

We celebrated Labor Day to recognize the contributions of labor unions and celebrate the workers who built our country and continue to toil every day to keep America working. Our featured speaker, Damon Connolly spoke eloquently about his working-class background and support for working people.

We were able to offer this free lunch, thanks to our union sponsors, the Building and Construction Trades Council of Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, and the California Teachers Association CTA and to Chris Rogers, Damon Connolly and Candace Tinkler for their generous donations.

I didn't attend the Republican dinner, so I'm not sure what they talked about. I was told that they were denying the local media free passes to cover the event. Their featured speakers included the Republican candidates for US Congress, State Senate, State Assembly, and State Superintendent.

These four Republican candidates will likely get a majority of votes in Del Norte County, but each one of them faces long odds of winning in November.

The June primary election results tell the story: US Congress, Democrat Jared Huffman (56.5%) beat Littau (11.4%); State Senate, Democrat Damon Connolly (75.4%) beat Gibbs (14.9%) and State Assembly, Democrat Chris Rogers (69.7%) beat Greer (30.3%). These margins likely will not change.

Superintendent of Public Instruction, Republican Sonja Shaw (22.6%) beat Democrat Richard Barrera (20.3%). Eight other candidates combined (57.4%). It almost doesn't matter who wins. This elected position has been relegated to mostly advisory. The next Governor will appoint an Education Secretary.

Del Norte County has a twisted political dynamic. Even though our county leans Republican, we are in Democratic leaning districts. Our representatives to state and national offices will most likely be Democrats. Our county more often elects republicans in local races, so I have learned to work with both.

We are fortunate that Jared Huffman, Damon Connolly and Chris Rogers are committed to representing all the counties in their district, even the ones that did not vote for them. For this I am grateful.

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