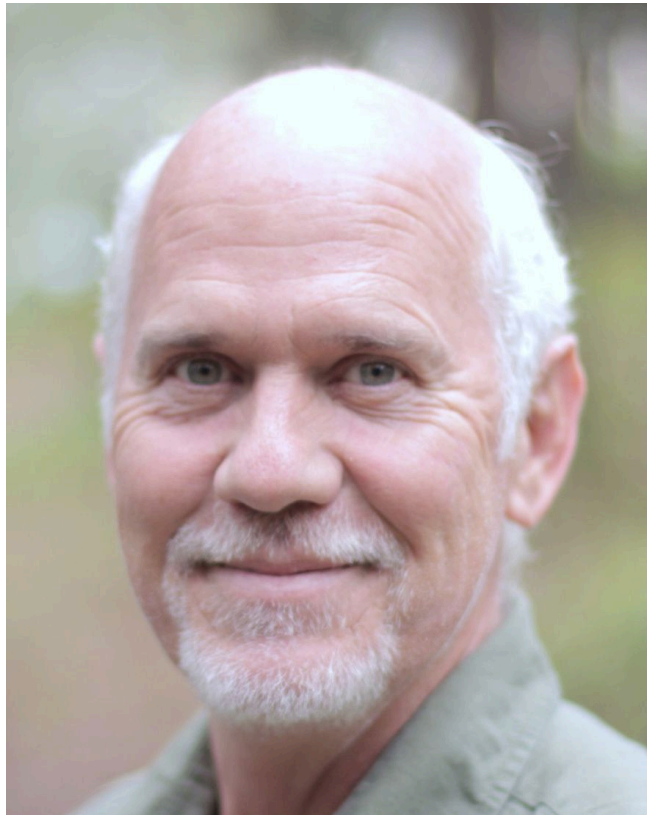


Guest Column: Four days at the county fair

August 16, 2022



Last weekend, I spent four days at the county fair in the Democratic Party booth. Although I was very tired at the end, it was well worth the effort. I truly enjoyed talking to all the people that passed through.

I missed being at the fair last year. Due to the high number of COVID cases, we pulled the plug at the last minute and did not staff our booth. We did not want to be a part of a local super-spreader event. Though there is no way to prove that the fair was the cause, there was a dramatic increase in COVID cases and a few deaths in the weeks following the fair last year.

I am not sure that the risk was less this year, but I think my tolerance for risk is higher. As an added precaution, I decided to get my second COVID booster. This gave me more confidence that I would have added protection if I was exposed. Only time will tell whether this worked.

In our booth we had a banner that said “Protect the Right to Reproductive Freedom. Vote Yes on Prop 1”

Proposition 1 is a ballot measure which will enshrine reproductive rights and freedoms into the California Constitution. This topic sparked a good deal of discussion. Most people had not yet heard of Prop 1, but once

we explained what it would do, there were no lack of opinions.

I had a couple of interactions that were especially noteworthy. At one point I was talking to a well-known Republican activist who was decidedly pro-choice. Based on her personal experience, she had a strong belief that each person must have the liberty to make their own reproductive health care decisions

While we were talking, a member of the Republican Central Committee stopped by and expressed her opposition to abortion and politely stated the reasons for her opinion. It was very interesting for me to listen and observe this discussion between these two Republican women.

This conversation exemplified the reality that this issue does not split along partisan lines. It is far more complicated than simple political considerations. What was most notable is that this discourse was very civil and respectful. This was the case with most of my encounters.

My position is that each person should be able to make their own choice regarding reproductive health decisions in consultation with their doctor and if desired with spiritual guidance. Freedom to choose and bodily autonomy are the primary issues. Imposing one's religious belief on another is contrary to the spirit of our Constitution.

I have a friend who is Catholic and personally opposes abortion, but he made an excellent point regarding the right to choose. He said that he was taught that God gave people free will. Therefore, he believes that it is not appropriate for government to deny people's free will.

The most challenging conversation I had was with a young woman who had very passionate feelings against abortion. I assumed that she was Catholic because she was wearing a t-shirt with the Virgin Mary on it. I knew that I would not change her mind and she would not change mine.

I unsuccessfully tried to diffuse this conflict by acknowledging that we would not agree even if we continued talking. However, she continued her verbal assault and told me that I was going to hell.

I usually can maintain a calm demeanor, but that's when I lost my patience. I responded, "You don't know me, and you are not qualified to judge me. Only God can judge me!" Only later did I remember the Bible verse to back me up, "Judge not, lest you be judged."

There is absolutely no way around it, abortion is a very emotional issue. But every person must be guaranteed the privacy, rights and freedom to make health care decisions that are appropriate for them without government interference.

Existing California law declares that every individual possesses a fundamental right to privacy with respect to personal reproductive decisions and prohibits the state from denying or interfering with a person's right to choose. Proposition 1 will amend the Constitution to strengthen these rights.

Every voter will have a chance to weigh in on this issue in November. There will be disagreements, but I hope that discussions will remain civil and respectful. Everyone has a right to their opinion and will have a right to express their opinion by voting this proposition up or down.

Kevin Hendrick is the chair of the Del Norte County Democratic Central Committee - dndems@gmail.com