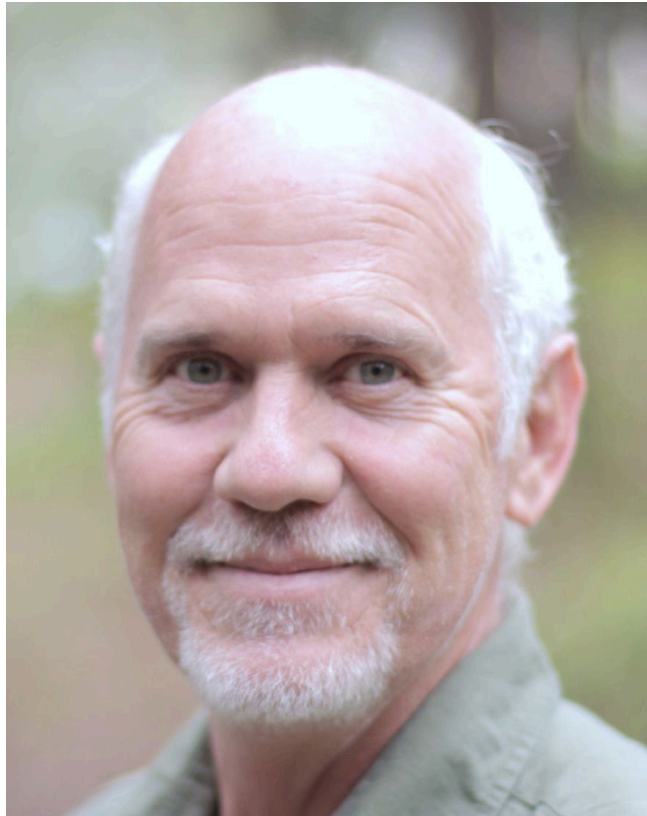


In My View: Democratic assembly candidates forum

February 4, 2024



When our current Assembly member Jim Wood decided not to run for reelection this created an open seat that has garnered a lot of interest. Our Assembly District stretches from Crescent City to Santa Rosa.

Although every assembly district has roughly the same number of voters, the Second District is one of the largest geographically and includes the northern half of Sonoma, Mendocino, Trinity, Humboldt, and Del Norte Counties. Representing this diverse district is a challenge that has been met admirably by Jim Wood.

Crowded Field

There are seven candidates running to be our next Assembly member, including one Republican and six Democrats. This is a crowded field, but it is good that we will have choices. The Republican is local politician, Michael Greer. Though he was only recently elected to the School Board, now he is seeking higher office.

The Democrats include Cynthia Click, Sales Manager and former Station Manager for KMUD Redwood Community Radio; Rusty Hicks, Chair, California Democratic Party; Ariel Kelley, Healdsburg Mayor; Frankie Myers, Yurok Vice Chair; Chris Rogers, Santa Rosa Councilmember and Ted Williams, Mendocino County Supervisor.

This provides a regional assortment of options. Rusty Hicks and Frankie Myers live in Humboldt County. Cynthia Click and Ted Williams are from Mendocino County. Chris Rogers and Ariel Kelley reside in Sonoma County. The important question is whether they will be able to represent the interests of Del Norte County.

Candidates Forum

On Sunday, January 21 the Del Norte County Democratic Party sponsored a forum to meet the Democratic candidates for Second District Assembly. There were two objectives of the forum, 1) provide an opportunity for local voters to get to know these candidates better, and 2) test to see if they would come to Del Norte.

It is always a concern, because we are remote and have a small population that our issues will not be a high priority for them. If they don't visit when they are campaigning, why should we believe they will come after they are elected.

Until the day before the event, all six candidates had agreed to attend this forum, but Ted Williams had to cancel at the last minute due to illness. The forum was attended by more than 70 local voters.

Head to Head

I always find it informative to watch candidates go head-to-head in a debate or candidates forum. This makes it easier to evaluate and compare their responses to questions on issues that I care about.

The candidates answered questions on topics including housing, education, health care, wind power, wildfires, energy resiliency and more. One attendee said, "I found it very helpful as I didn't have a clue as to who any of these people were and my vote otherwise would have been a random selection based upon no data."

This candidate forum was recorded by KFUG Community radio and rebroadcast on kfugradio.org. Jessica Cejnar Andrews also wrote an excellent story about the forum for the Wild Rivers Outpost.

Safe District

The Second Assembly District is considered a safe district for a Democrat to win. The voter registration is predominantly Democrats and only twenty five percent of the voters are Republican. Because of this disparity, one of these six Democrats is certain to win in November.

The only wrinkle in this prediction is due to the nature of primaries in California. In California's "jungle primary" the top two vote getters will advance to the general election. Though it is possible that the top two will both be Democrats, it is more likely that the six Democratic candidates will split the democrat vote.

Since there is only one Republican in the race, if he gets all the Republican votes, that twenty five percent may be enough to carry him through to the general election. Nevertheless, this won't be enough votes to prevail in the November general election.

Senate Showdown

I also watched a showdown on January 22 of the four candidates that are running for U.S. Senate. This included Democratic Congressional representatives Adam Schiff, Barbara Lee and Katie Porter and a former baseball player from Los Angeles, Republican Steve Garvey. This debate can be viewed on FOXLA.COM

While the three democrats are well known and have run vigorous campaigns, Steve Garvey has been flying under the radar. I was curious to hear what this Republican had to say. After Garvey evaded most questions and answered without detail or specificity, Katie Porter had the best zinger, "Once a dodger, always a dodger."

Once again, the jungle primary rules may allow this baseball player to make it into the top two, because the three democratic candidates will split the statewide Democratic vote. However, it is highly unlikely we will have a retired baseball player as our next Senator.

Experience Matters

I attended the Board of Supervisors meeting (1/23) and was reminded how important it is to elect people who know how things work. Joey Borges and Darrin Short insisted on keeping the prohibition on Tri-Agency involvement with offshore wind, because of their concern about the impact to fisherfolk.

This is a reasonable concern but a bad approach. They do not seem to understand that the way to protect our fishing industry is to directly engage in the discussions on offshore wind. Simply stating that you support fishing is an empty gesture if you are not doing anything about it.

Supervisors Short and Borges should also consider the other non-fishing residents of this county who may benefit from an offshore wind industry that will create jobs and economic development for our community.

The best way to preserve fishing is to be at the table to negotiate mitigation of any negative impacts on fishing. There is an old saying, "If you are not at the table, you might be on the menu."

Your Vote Matters

Ballots will be mailed on February 5 and soon California voters will be making their selection for all federal, state, and local races. Do your best to become an informed voter and remember to return your ballot by March 5.

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