

MBDC Endorsed Candidates

Dear Mtn Bear Members & Others,

Over the course of this year, our club has been visited by several of the candidates in the legislative races appearing on your ballot which don't typically seek the Club's endorsement. However, the race for County Assessor is the exception, and the other is a non-partisan race for the SB Community College Board in District 5. Both candidates in these races are registered Democrats.

I would encourage you to bypass their opponents in the respective races for the following reasons:

There are 2, well-qualified candidates for Assessor with on-the-job experience, Dara Smith and Don Williamson who lost his re-election bid several cycles ago and is trying again this year to win it back. He did a good job while in the position and is a reputable person; he just lost to his opponent. He has been out of public life for a while now, & it's time for someone new who has the energy to win, Dara Smith.

She has been working as a Deputy Assistant Assessor in LA County Office for 20 years now, but she resides in SB County, and commuted every day. She has held several leadership roles & supervised many large groups of fellow employees on task forces & special projects for LA. She also reached out to vulnerable portions of the population to inform them of policies to protect their home investment & quality of life in their later years, like Veterans, the retirement community, and people who have inherited property from deceased relatives.

Dara has saved many millions of dollars for LA residents & wants to do the same for SB residents now. The other 2 opponents in the race have no experience in the line of work assessing property. You may recognize their names from past elections. Blanca Gomez makes a habit of jumping into races against other Democrats, splitting the vote. We used to be in the same Assembly District with her, but no longer due to the census redistricting process. The other candidate is a former Supervisor on the County Board. She started out as a Democrat but is now a registered Republican. This is not the time to return either of these candidates to positions of responsibility for which they have no qualifications.

Our candidate in the non-partisan race for the Community College Board is James Albert. There are similarities with his rival. Both have lived the experience of the institution they wish to serve, understanding the value of achieving a higher education and making that access available to future students seeking employment with a livable wage in SBC where they reside. They also share the view of where they wish to take the district to make that outcome a reality. But the paths taken to get to this point have diverged. While both transferred to a 4 year institution for a BA degree, one continued for a MA at a private institution. This person has worked with impressive organizations, public & political, while working on his PhD to advance the shared agenda, if he wins the seat. But how long will he stay? You don't need a PhD to be a Community

College Trustee. One gets the impression that he is building a reputation to eventually leave the CC to run for higher office. Once the CC is on track to achieve the perceived goal, where will he go next? Think Jay Obernolte: mayor of BB, CA Assemblyman, Congressman; a businessman turned career politician. He just needed a seat from which to start his rise on the political scene.

After graduation from Aquinas High School in San Bernardino, with the help of an athletic scholarship and Pell Grant, James attended and graduated from CSU Monterey Bay. Four years later, James graduated with academic honors and a Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology. His diverse work experience has been centered on merging his passion for community advocacy with a fulfilling career. For the last several years, he has worked for the County of San Bernardino and is currently an Office Specialist for the Public Defender's Office.

James has been a consistent advocate for a whole-student mentality that recognizes the success and excellence of our students is linked to the support and morale of our districts' faculty, counselors, advisors, and classified staff. He has a history of working with leaders in student government to pass solutions-based resolutions in support of increased funding for our K-14 public education system that were later supported by our governing board.

With the rising cost of living and the demands of our labor market, James believes it's essential to eliminate socioeconomic barriers to our community colleges and guarantee affordable access to textbooks, course materials, housing, child care, healthy foods, and other basic needs.

Our region has become a news desert which has led to systemic corruption. James believes we need to tap into KVCR/FNX, our local public multimedia source, which is located on San Bernardino Valley College, to lead with investigative reporting and holding the powerful accountable.

In his spare time, James monitors the local political activity in surrounding county communities, and keeps an eye on the decisions of the County Board. James firmly believes that "all politics are local" and that the grassroots level is the best place for him to be in order to effectuate change.

I humbly ask you to consider casting your vote for James Albert for the Community College Trustee seat in District 5. Also, please consider voting for Dara Smith in the Assessor's race. Thank you.

Long Live Democracy & the Right to Vote!

Mickey Laws