



Supervisor Katie Rice
District 2 Newsletter: October 2012

Democracy is not a Spectator Sport

November 6th, Election Day, a presidential general election, is just around the corner. Whether you vote by mail, or do it the old fashioned way, I hope that your intent is to participate and you will follow through on that intent.

Typically, Marin County voters participate in the democratic process at much higher percentages than the rest of the state. But even our numbers are not always something to brag about. Take the recent June 5th presidential primary. Of the roughly 150,000 registered voters in Marin County, only 50% turned out and voted. Compare this to over 70% in the June 2008 hotly contested general election.

I'm using this month's E-News primarily to advocate for your participation--regardless of your party affiliation, or whether or not you agree with me, or the Board of Supervisors, on positions we have taken (see below). Please take the time to inform yourself—beyond this newsletter, beyond the glossy mailers and deluge of TV ads —about the various races for our representation in Sacramento, in Washington DC, about local and statewide ballot measures on the upcoming November 6th ballot.

I've also included an update on the recent changes to the County's public health lab services and the State Responsibility Area (SRA) Fire Prevention Fee. As always, let me know if you have any questions or suggestions, issues or topics of interest that you would like me to address in the future. Feel free to call my office at 415-473-7331 or email me at krice@marincounty.org. Thank you!

Marin County Board of Supervisors takes positions on eight state ballot initiatives

The Marin County Board of Supervisors has historically weighed in on ballot measures and initiatives that the board feels have relevance to Marin County government, policy, and/or general goals and objectives. For the upcoming November general election, the Board discussed and took positions on eight of the 11 state ballot measures. I share a synopsis of each measure (from County Administrator's legislative analyst) and general reasoning behind position taken as discussed by the Board.

The Board of Supervisors voted to support:

Proposition 30 ("The Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012") is sponsored by Governor Brown. If approved, this measure would increase state personal income taxes on annual earnings over \$250,000 for seven years, and increase the statewide sales and use tax by ¼ cent for four years. Of those additional revenues, 89% would be dedicated to K-12 schools and 11% to community colleges. Additionally, the measure would create constitutional funding protections for the public safety services

that were realized to Counties as part of AB 109 in 2011. The currently adopted 2012-2013 state budget was balanced under the assumption that this measure will pass. If it fails, \$6 billion in automatic “trigger cuts” will go into effect, largely to the detriment of public education.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously supported Proposition 30 given the potential for trigger cuts to public school funding and other cuts directly impacting County budget.

Proposition 34 (“The SAFE California Act”) would eliminate the death penalty in California and replace it with life in prison without the possibility of parole. It would also require persons found guilty of murder to work while in prison, with their wages to be applied to any victim restitution fines or orders against them.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously supported Proposition 34 as its passage is estimated to produce significant cost savings to both the state and county government.

Proposition 36 (“Three Strikes Reform Act of 2012”) would modify California’s Three–Strikes law to impose life sentences only when a new felony conviction is for a serious or violent crime and a judge determines the sentence would not pose unreasonable risk to public safety.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously supported Proposition 36 as its passage is estimated to produce significant cost savings to both the state and county government.

Proposition 37: (“The California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act”) would require labeling on raw or processed food offered for sale to consumers if the food is made from plants or animals with genetic material changed in certain specified ways. The measure would also prohibit labeling or advertising such food as “natural,” while exempting certified organic foods from these (labeling) requirements, as certified organic foods must already be GMO free.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously supported Proposition 37 because it aligns with County policies and goals supporting local organic agriculture and healthy communities’ initiatives. The measure is also consistent with Measure A (GMO Free Marin) passed by Marin County voters in 2004.

Proposition 39: (“The California Clean Energy Jobs Act”) would reverse a previously adopted change in the state tax code by requiring multi-state businesses to calculate their state income tax liability based on the percentage of their sales in California. If passed the measure would add approximately \$1 billion annually to state’s tax revenue. The measure also includes a provision which would direct nearly half (approx \$500 million) of newly realized revenues for the next five years to green energy and energy-efficiency projects, producing clean energy jobs in California.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously supported Proposition 39 in that it reverses a tax benefit given to multi-state businesses; provides stimulus to the green energy sector, and creates jobs in state.

Proposition 40 (“Veto Referendum on the State Senate Redistricting Plan”) is a referendum on the recently adopted State Senate District boundaries. A “yes” vote on this ballot measure will maintain the existing, State Senate District boundaries, which were determined by the independent Citizens Redistricting Commission created by voter passage of Proposition 11 in 2008.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously supported Proposition 40 to uphold current senate district boundaries as determined by the California Citizens Redistricting Commission per the will of the California voters in 2008 .

Board of Supervisors voted to oppose:

Proposition 32 (“The Stop Special Interest Money Now Act”) would ban use of any portion of automatic payroll deductions by unions, corporations, and governments of employees' wages to be used for political purposes. It would also ban corporate and union contributions to state and local candidates and ban contributions by government contractors to the politicians who control contracts awarded to them.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously opposed Proposition 32 given the measure, while having the appearance of campaign finance reform, would primarily impact campaign funding mechanisms of unions and the workers they represent, without impacting funding mechanisms traditionally used by corporations, and business trade groups organizations.

Prop 38 (“Our Children, Our Future: Local Schools and Early Education Investment and Bond Debt Reduction Act”) is commonly referred to as the “Munger Initiative.” If enacted, this measure would increase personal income tax rates for annual earnings over \$7,316, using a sliding scale from 0.4% for the lowest earners to 2.2% for individuals earning over \$2.5 million, and would sunset after 12 years. During the first four years, 60% of revenues would go to K-12 schools, 30% towards repaying state debt, and 10% to early childhood programs. Thereafter 85% of revenues would be allocated towards K-12 schools, and 15% to early childhood programs. Proposition 38 competes directly with Governor Brown’s Proposition 30. If both measures were to pass, the one with the most votes would prevail.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously opposed Proposition 38 given their support of Proposition 30.

Please visit www.smartvoter.org for more information on any of these propositions as well as registering to vote and voting.

Changes to Public Health Lab Services

On September 25th, the Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on whether to continue provision of public health laboratory services functions through the County’s local public health lab in San Rafael, or through a shared services/regional lab model at the Napa/Solano County regional lab in Fairfield.

After hearing extensive public testimony, and receiving detailed analysis from staff and outside experts, the board voted unanimously to close the San Rafael lab and join the regional lab. This new shared services model has been designed to provide stable, long-term lab services without compromising County’s mandate and commitment to providing public health lab services. The move is projected to save \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually.

At the hearing, the public expressed concerns regarding loss of local control, and the ability of a regional lab to meet the public health lab testing needs and requirements (both on a day to day basis, and during an emergency or “surge” event). Specifically, concerns were raised about the feasibility of using a regional lab for water testing, which requires collection to testing to occur within a 6-hour time frame.

The regional/JPA model allows Marin County to participate as an equal partner in lab governance and oversight, while reducing costs through shared efficiencies, economies of scale, and opportunities to pool investment in technology. With the move to a regional lab, the County ensures fiscal sustainability while building capability, capacity, and flexibility in meeting the emerging needs and challenges presented by the quickly changing world of health care and public health, and ever tightening fiscal reality.

An Update on the State Responsibility Area (SRA) Fire Prevention Fee

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (HJTA) filed a class action suit against the State on October 3rd, seeking to overturn the Fire Prevention Fee by challenging the constitutionality on the grounds it is really a tax that needed a two-thirds vote in the Legislature to pass, but received only a bare majority and therefore never became law. There is no court ruling or injunction yet, but homeowners could be eligible for refunds if the class action suit is successful.

To be eligible for a refund, homeowners must first pay their bill, then file a protest with the State. HJTA has established a website that shows how to protest the fee and provides the necessary forms. You can also sign up for free email bulletins that will keep you informed of the progress of the class action suit. Visit <http://firetaxprotest.org/> and click on "refund."

Upcoming Parks and Open Space Events

Visit <http://www.marincountyparks.org/Depts/PK/Calendar> for a complete listing of events.

Nature for Kids: Cascade Canyon

Thursday, November 8, 2012, 10am – 1pm

Meet at the gate at the end of Cascade Dr.

This beautiful preserve is always a great place to explore nature. If the rains have come we will see if the salamanders and banana slugs have come out of hiding. If it is still dry, we will visit the shaded pools in the upper creek to see what is there. This walk is free of charge, no registration is necessary. We request that no animals (except service animals) attend. David Herlocker will lead. Questions: Contact David at (415) 893-9508 or DHerlocker@marincounty.org. Rain may cancel: Call (415) 893-9527 after 7am on the morning of the event to hear a recorded message if cancelled. Meet at the gate at the end of Cascade Dr.

Gary Giacomini

Sunday, November 18, 2012, 9am – 2pm

Meet at the Willis Evans Trailhead (formerly Bates Canyon).

This ridge above the south side of the San Geronimo Valley is one of the great gems in the county. A pygmy Sargent Cypress forest and incredible views are our reward for the sustained climb that will bring us to the top (1,200 foot elevation gain, 7 mile round trip). This walk is free of charge, no registration is necessary. This walk is for adults. We request that no animals (except service animals) attend. David Herlocker will lead. Questions: Contact David at (415) 893-9508 or DHerlocker@marincounty.org. Rain may cancel: Call (415) 893-9527 after 7am on the morning of the event to hear a recorded message if cancelled.

Art of Nature at Roy's Redwoods

Tuesday, November 20, 2012, 10am – 12pm

Meet at the Roy's Redwoods entry gate

Ranger Charlie Schonwasser will teach kids about local plants and trees the creative way! First we will discuss and use various plant samples found in the area and then create our very own plant identification book. Then we will head out on a short nature walk to field-test the books. This event is recommended for ages 5 - 12. Questions: Contact Charlie Schonwasser at (415) 473-2816 or CSchonwasser@marincounty.org.