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—The First Amendment

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AS WE SEE IT: SUPERVISOR RACES

Coonerty for 3rd District

Santa Cruz incumbent has shown independence, willingness to change

The job of representing Santa Cruz on the county Board of Supervisors is not like representing Live Oak or Aptos or the San Lorenzo Valley, since Santa Cruz has its own municipal government. The only direct representation comes along the North Coast, including the small towns of Davenport and Bonny Doon. Nevertheless, the seat of power on the board for many years has come from the 3rd District.

Neal Coonerty, who is running for a second term, follows the tenures of Gary Patton and Mardi Wormhoudt, both of whom were strong personalities with definite ideas on shaping county land-use and environmental policies. Both were polarizing figures.

Coonerty, however, says he has been a different kind of leader, more moderate than his predecessors — and that's true. He has been more of a conciliator, careful to continue some directions set by his predecessors, but with an appreciation for economic issues and business interests that comes naturally to the longtime owner of a downtown bookshop.

He's served during a time of recession and drastic cutbacks in county funding and government — but can point to support for the public purchase of the Union Pacific rail line and, with his son, Santa Cruz City Councilman Ryan Coonerty, for the groundbreaking growth pact with UC Santa Cruz. His opponents — local architect Cove Britton and water activist Doug Deitch — simply do not have the experience, knowledge or the breadth of community support Coonerty can muster.

He's been criticized for not preventing the loss of the Cemex cement manufacturing operation in Davenport, which the company, in part, blamed on the cost of doing business in Santa Cruz County. But Cemex, headquartered in Mexico, has had serious financial problems in the construction downturn, and it's hardly fair to blame this on Coonerty.

On another front, Coonerty candidly concedes the board simply didn't probe deeply enough into a pay deal for upper county administrators that also gave them significant raises.

But true to his word, he successfully worked to suspend the pay package, which is now on hold.

Coonerty has a long track record as a former city councilman, a business leader and as 3rd District supervisor working for Santa Cruz and the North Coast. He deserves re-election in the June 8 primary.

Campos for 4th District

Incumbent seeks fourth term as PV faces a series of major problems

The person representing the Pajaro Valley supervisorial district has seemingly been unable over the decades to gather enough support from other county supervisors to keep the Watsonville area feeling appreciated.

Three-time incumbent Tony Campos has not fared differently. When a recent court consolidation plan came down gutting much of the criminal calendar heard at the new Watsonville downtown courthouse, Campos was not consulted (to be fair no supervisors were) and his subsequent protests were ignored.

Watsonville and the greater Pajaro Valley have long felt like the poor stepchild, unwanted and unconsidered by the richer, whiter, more liberal North County.

Campos' leadership has rightfully been questioned in other areas as well — especially in the land-use decisions where he has to bow out because he is an active real estate agent in Watsonville and owns a number of properties that ostensibly could influence his vote.

Nevertheless, he has pushed for benefits for the Pajaro Valley, including a vocational training school at Cabrillo College's Watsonville campus — much needed in a city where about a quarter of the population is currently out of work.

He's also successfully fought for funds to rebuild roads in rural areas of his district and in securing the money and partnerships vital to getting the downtown Civic Plaza built.

Campos has the temperament, countywide associations and relationships, and sense of place and challenges that his opponents, in one aspect or another, do not. Both Emilio Martinez and Greg Caput currently serve on the Watsonville City Council (the other five members endorse Campos); both have plenty of ideas for improvements for Watsonville and should consider funding ways to bring those changes in their current elected positions.

Campos, who worked his way up from the lettuce loading docks in Salinas, was the first Mexican-American member of the Watsonville City Council. He'll need to summon the will and energy in a fourth term to help a city facing tough times, with problems ranging from a botched-out housing market, a water shortage and divisions among farmers about how to solve it, high unemployment, and struggling schools.

It will take dedication and hard work — and using his long and valuable experience to bring people together to work for the betterment of the Pajaro Valley.

With that said, we recommend the re-election of Campos as 4th District county supervisor.



Mexican presidente in US Congress

When it comes to visits to the U.S. by international heads of state, it's easy to see which ones carry the most weight. Mexican President Felipe Calderon not only is being greeted with an official arrival ceremony in Washington, D.C.



MARIA ELENA SALINAS

King Features also will have the distinction of being on the shortlist of foreign leaders who have the privilege of addressing a joint session of Congress.

In making the announcement, Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi said, "As president of Mexico, our neighbor and friend, we look forward to hearing President Calderon's message to the American people." She went on to say, "Relations with Mexico are of utmost importance to the United States. President Calderon's address to Congress will provide us with a renewed opportunity to strengthen our bonds of friendship, discuss our shared challenges and embrace common opportunities."

These words have a familiar ring to them. It's pretty much what was said of Vicente Fox when he became the first Mexican president to address a joint session of Congress back in 2001. It was Sept. 6, to be exact. It was a historic moment for U.S.-Mexico relations. "Our two countries at present are living in an era which is unique in the history of our relations — an era full of challenges that we must face united, and of opportunities which we must take up together," said Fox.

At the top of his agenda was immigration reform and the legalization of millions of undocumented Mexican nationals. He told members of Congress, "As the history of this country shows, migration has always rendered more economic benefits to the United States than the cost. It entails." President George W. Bush at the time cautiously embraced the idea of immigration reform while opposing amnesty.

Of course, neither Fox nor his amigo Bush could have imagined at that time that five days later everything would change, literally. The 9/11 terrorist attacks showed

us how vulnerable we are to being victims of hatred. But another, almost inevitable, consequence is that it knocked the relations between Mexico and the U.S. off the priority list, and with it the possibility of moving forward with immigration reform. Suddenly, immigrants, particularly those crossing our southern border, became the enemy in the eyes of some Americans, and a possible threat. Never mind that none of the terrorists from 9/11 crossed the border from Mexico.

Nearly nine years have passed since a Mexican president spoke directly to the American people, and once again Mexico is on the radar for the U.S. and so is the need for immigration reform, but not under the best of circumstances. When President Calderon visits Washington, there will be some tough issues he'll have to address: "The growing violence in his country that has taken more than 22,000 lives since he declared war on the drug cartels and its effect on towns on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. And the new Arizona law whose underlying message is: Get rid of the Mexicans."

President Calderon has criticized the law as a violation of human rights that opens the door to "intolerance, hate and discrimination." His government has put out an advisory for Arizona, warning that "it must be assumed that every Mexican citizen may be harassed and questioned without cause at any time." Ironically, after the Arizona law was approved, Amnesty International criticized Mexico for its own treatment of undocumented immigrants, mainly from Central America.

Calderon faces a tough balancing act during his visit here. Aside from all the pomp and circumstance, he will need to demand respect for his co-nationals in this country and push for immigration reform, while trying to explain why he hasn't created the environment to make them want to stay in their own country. And he also must clarify why, with all of the resources invested in the war against drugs and the accomplishments it has achieved, his government still has not been able to stop the bloodshed that just last month hit an all-time high.

Bienvenido, Presidente Calderon. Good luck — it's a tough crowd out there.

It's not all Greek to me: How the United States, Greece differ economically

It's an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the crisis in Greece is making some people — people who opposed health care reform and are itching for an excuse to dismantle Social Security — very, very happy. Everywhere you look there are editorials and commentaries, some posing as objective reporting, asserting that Greece today will be America tomorrow

unless we abandon all that nonsense about taking care of those in need. The truth, however, is that America isn't Greece — and, in any case, the message from Greece isn't what these people would have you believe. So, how do America and Greece compare? Both nations have lately been running large budget deficits, roughly comparable as a percentage of GDP. Markets, however, treat them very differently: The interest rate on Greek government bonds is more than twice the rate on U.S. bonds, because investors

see a high risk that Greece will eventually default on its debt, while seeing virtually no risk that America will do the same. Why? One answer is that we have a much lower level of debt — the amount we already owe, as opposed to new borrowing — relative to GDP. True, our debt should have been even lower. We'd be better positioned to deal with the current emergency if so much money hadn't been squandered on tax cuts for the rich and an unfunded war. But we still entered the crisis in much better shape than the Greeks.

Even more important, however, is the fact that we have a clear path to economic recovery, while Greece doesn't. The U.S. economy has been growing since last summer, thanks to fiscal stimulus and expansionary policies by the Federal Reserve. I wish that growth were faster; still, it's finally producing job gains and it's also showing up in revenues. Right now, we're on track to match Congressional Budget Office projections of a substantial rise in tax receipts. Put those projections together with the Obama administration's policies, and

they imply a sharp fall in the budget deficit over the next few years. Greece, on the other hand, is caught in a trap. During the good years, when capital was flowing in, Greek costs and prices got far out of line with the rest of Europe. If Greece still had its own currency, it could restore competitiveness through devaluation. But since it doesn't. And since leaving the euro is still considered unthinkable, Greece faces years of grinding deflation and low or zero economic growth. So, the



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