

Community Comment
June 6, 2014
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2014 June Election

The primaries are over. This seems like a long campaign season especially here in Humboldt County. As always, I would like to thank all those who threw their hat into the ring. Running for elective office is time consuming and stressful. It is often unpleasant as things get personal. It is hard work. Public speaking is often listed as one of the most difficult activities for most people to do and that is what a candidate has to do to get elected. A candidate has to study and understand the office of interest and know the current issues affecting that office. A race for a seat is competitive and debate can turn hot. Candidates need to be able to think and speak under these conditions and that is not easy. So, to all of you who put yourselves and your families in the spotlight, I thank you. This is a government for and by the people. It is essential that some of us step up to the plate, risk being embarrassed and worse, and offer our services. For over two centuries, this is what has kept our government working for all of us.

The other side of this coin is what happened on Tuesday. Elections are the time for all of us to give direction to our elected representatives and express what we want from our collective government. We had a decent turnout in Humboldt County but state wide and nationally, as predicted, the turnout was low. When only a few of us bother to vote, this minority group of people determine the direction our government will follow in the immediate future. When this is not the will of the majority, we get what we deserve; frustration with government. Men and women have died to secure our right to vote in free and open elections. Some countries in the world can only dream of this right. When we chose not to vote, we diminish the gift these men and women have given us. We also diminish the work our government can do for us. It is critical that we vote and make our choices known.

To the winners of the election, congratulations. You have been given the honor of representing your fellow citizens. Please take this honor to heart. Governing is hard work. To first time officials, one of the first things you may notice is that campaigns are simplistic. Governing is complex. You were elected on a platform but now that platform has to be adjusted with reality. I hope you find that compromise is being willing to work together, not giving up your principles. I hope you also recognize that you represent all of your constituents; not just those that voted for you. You may not be able to satisfy everyone but you must listen to everyone. Even those that opposed you have good ideas that may work. I'm one of those people that know I don't have all the answers. And while it's true that more information makes for better decisions, it's also harder work to use all the information you can get. Governing is not simple.

It looks like we have a new District Attorney. Congratulations to Maggie Fleming. Considering the current state of the office, you have your work cut out for you. Good luck in this important endeavor.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.