

## EDITORIAL: Yee, Swearengin miss mark with political issues



State controller candidates Ashley Swearengin, left, and Betty Yee.

### FRESNO BEE FILE

In the hardball world of politics, candidates often misstate facts and play games with ballot titles.

An example is the state controller's race, where Betty Yee and Ashley Swearengin are looking for any possible edge.

Swearengin's ballot designation in the primary was "Mayor, City of Fresno." Though she was the top vote-getter in a crowded field, Swearengin dropped "Fresno" for the general election and substituted "Mayor/CEO."

Tony Quinn, a longtime political analyst and former Republican legislative aide, told The Bee's John Ellis that the new ballot title was a smart move: "I was surprised to see Ashley with 'City of Fresno.' What does that have to do with controller of California? It's much wiser to have something that sounds like you know how to manage money."

Maybe the change will help Swearengin with voters in the rest of California. We'll find out come Nov. 4. But we suspect it might hurt her with some Fresno voters. After all, Swearengin has spent a good part of her nearly six years as mayor telling Fresno voters to be proud of their city; a city whose voters in 1993 had the wisdom to adopt the strong mayor — excuse us, "CEO" — style of government.

It seems to us that she isn't all that proud of Fresno. Not enough, anyway, to tell her campaign consultants she won the primary with "Fresno" and she would stick with it.

As for Yee, a San Francisco resident who is a member of the California Board of Equalization, political ambition

trumps truth. In a news release criticizing Swearingin for changing her ballot title, Yee's campaign says, "Since elected to office, Mayor Swearingin has failed to deliver on her promises to make Fresno a better place to live: Soaring deficits, unbalanced budgets, record unemployment, three credit downgrades to junk status, and festering poverty and homelessness are Swearingin's (sic) enduring legacy."

The record shows Swearingin has done an exemplary job of leading Fresno and fixing the financial mess created by the Great Recession and her mayoral predecessor. She has exhibited political courage in addressing the city's finances quickly instead of placating public employee unions by kicking problems down the road. In regard to homelessness, Swearingin has met the issue head on. She has adopted President Obama's "housing first" agenda, unified stakeholders and solicited community donations.

While we don't like Swearingin's ballot title change, Yee's distortion of Swearingin's record is out-and-out dirty campaigning.

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