

The Bee recommends: Pacheco and Mendes for Fresno County Board of Supervisors

By The Bee Editorial Board



Candidates Ernest "Buddy" Mendez and Brian Pacheco

It's no secret that the Fresno County Board of Supervisors has become sidetracked by rivalries, vendettas and members whose adherence to political party talking points blind them both to solutions and the needs of residents.

Fortunately, the Nov. 4 election provides voters with an opportunity to reshape the board and get it headed in the right direction. We believe the candidates who are most capable of helping Fresno County realize its great potential are Brian Pacheco in District 1 and Ernest "Buddy" Mendes in District 4.

Pacheco, a Kerman dairy owner, has a solid record of public service with the Kerman Unified School District Board of Trustees, the Community Regional Medical Center Board of Directors and Fresno County Farm Bureau. He is intelligent, hardworking and doesn't rush to judgment. Pacheco also is a bit of an oddity in the political world in that he isn't a headline seeker.

This work-hard, study-hard, team-player approach is exactly what is needed on a board that has been dominated by big personalities more interested in exerting personal power than overcoming the myriad challenges facing the county.

Pacheco's opponent is Fresno City Council Member Blong Xiong, who will term out of that office at the end of the year. Xiong edged Pacheco by just eight votes in the June primary, which had 16,275 votes cast in a five-candidate race to succeed three-term District 1 representative Phil Larson, who is retiring. The district includes parts of the city of Fresno's west side, Mendota, Firebaugh, San Joaquin and Kerman along with 11 Fresno County unincorporated communities.

Xiong is passionate about representing the underserved, and we applaud that. He also wants the board to restore employee pay cuts and foster a better relationship with workers. We applaud that, too.

But we believe that Pacheco also will stand up for the underserved in our community and vote to restore employee

paycuts as the budget allows. The edge he holds over this opponent is his global view and track record of getting things done in tough situations -- in the business world and in public service.

Mendes, a Riverdale farmer, nearly won the primary outright with a well-financed campaign that clearly connected with voters in District 4, which stretches more than 100 miles from Orange Cove to Coalinga in the southern section of the county. The seat is now held by Judy Case McNairy, who is retiring after four terms.

Mendes is a board member for the Riverdale Joint Unified School District, Riverdale Public Utilities District and Southwest Transportation Agency. He has talked throughout the campaign about Riverdale High School's graduation rate (99% for the 2012-2013 school year) and the fact that the school district was able to weather the recession without layoffs or pay cuts.

His budget experience and his approach to labor negotiations -- treat people fairly and with respect -- would be a big boost to the Board of Supervisors. Another plus that Mendes would bring to the board is a vast knowledge of water issues learned as a farmer on east-side and west-side land.

"I am problem solver," Mendes told The Bee Editorial Board, when asked why voters should back him.

If he is elected, we will hold Mendes' to his promise to find ways to increase funding for mental-health programs. He said that providing the mentally ill with treatment they need is the right thing to do and would help keep them out of the county's overcrowded jail.

Daniel Parra, a Fowler City Council member for six years and computer systems analyst, finished second in the primary and is a worthy challenger to Mendes. He has the backing of a majority of Fresno County mayors and is endorsed by Fresno County Supervisor Henry R. Perea.

But, on balance, Mendes is the better choice -- one who will bring a wealth of public service experience, an independent streak and a focus on problem solving that Fresno County needs.

In the Nov. 4 election, vote Brian Pacheco in District 1 or Ernest "Buddy" Mendes in District 4.

Comment by going to fresnobee.com and clicking on the **editorial**.

Copyright

© 2014 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>