

Fresno Unified candidate forum was devoid of most candidates

By Rory
Appleton

Two Fresno Unified school board candidates did not show up and a third was over an hour late for a candidate forum Thursday night in southeast Fresno.

Around 100 spectators packed the Mosqueda Community Center at 4670 E. Butler Ave. to hear from the school board candidates for Area 1 (Edison High School), and Area 3 (Sunnyside High School). Spanish and Hmong translation services were offered to many of the attendees.

When the scheduled start time of 6 p.m. rolled around, only Area 3 challenger Esmeralda Diaz was present. Area 1 incumbent Cal Johnson, Area 1 challenger Christian Flemming and Area 3 incumbent Valerie Davis were nowhere to be found despite having confirmed with forum organizers that they would attend. Area 1 challenger Debbie Darden had told organizers ahead of time that she would not be able to make it.

The forum started at 6:30 p.m., with Diaz answering all five of the forum's previously agreed-upon questions on issues such as student attendance, test scores and community programs.

Davis arrived at 7:15 p.m. while Diaz was answering an audience member's question on district-provided breakfasts for students. Davis weighed in after Diaz, and the Q&A session continued. Davis did not give an opening statement or a reason for her late arrival.

As of 7:30 p.m., Area 1 candidates Johnson and Fleming had not shown up.

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