

## Thoughts on the Election Season



# THE CITY BEAT

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Posted by George Hostetter on November 17, 2014

A half-dozen thoughts on 2014 election season as it winds down:

1.) It's only 567 days from Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014 to Tuesday, June 7, 2016. That's 81 weeks until the California primary in a presidential election year.

To me, that's not far away. After all, it has been 532 days (76 weeks) from Tuesday, June 4, 2013 to Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014. As we all recall, June 4, 2013 was the Measure G/residential trash privatization special election. The Measure G drama seems like yesterday to me.

My point: It'll soon be OK to seriously ponder who will run for mayor of Fresno in 2016.

2.) I predicted to some of my newsroom colleagues that Esmeralda Soria will shake up things on the Fresno City Council dais.

Soria has a 422-vote lead in the District 1 race. The final vote count has yet to be announced (it'll probably come on Wednesday), but her lead is insurmountable.

I was most impressed by the number of young volunteers in Soria's campaign. I went by her election headquarters on Election Day. There were at least 20 people in there, working the phones. All but one appeared to be under 30.

Soria might reignite interest in City Hall among our youth.

3.) There's also an edge to Soria. It'll be interesting to see how that plays out as the pressure of legislating builds.

For example, I stood next to Soria on Nov. 7 at the Fresno County Clerk's Office. People were awaiting the updated election results.

Soria said the mail ballot of one of her supporters had been rejected by election officials. If I understood correctly, there was a dispute about the validity of the signature on the ballot envelope.

"Voter suppression?" Soria said to me.

4.) Cary Catalano was on the short end of the District 1 council race. But he is close to finding a different route to City Hall power.

Mayor Ashley Swearengin has appointed Catalano to the Fresno Planning Commission, replacing Andy Hansen-Smith. The City Council will be asked to approve the appointment on Thursday.

Catalano said his loss to Soria didn't dampen his desire to serve the public. He said he knew he'd find a way to get involved.

"That happened sooner than I expected," Catalano said.

He said someone from the Swearengin administration (he didn't say who) called him last Thursday with the planning

commission idea. Last Thursday was a day after Catalano shook Soria's hand at the County Clerk's Office after the second vote update and conceded.

5.) Twenty-four hours after the polls closed on Nov. 4, Soria found herself 20 votes behind. More than 40,000 late absentee and provisional ballots in the county remained to be counted. Hundreds of them would be from District 1.

Soria surged past Catalano as those votes were counted. It reminded me of the Measure G special election. The pro-privatization side had a lead as everyone went to bed that night. Then the late absentees and provisionals were counted. The anti-privatization side surged to victory.

Such come-from-behind heroics have to be crushing to the losing side.

How did Soria do it? I called Fresno County Supervisor Henry R. Perea, a strong supporter of Soria and the anti-privatization side.

Perea didn't give reveal any secrets. He said only that the late surge "was by design."

Perea made one other key point.

Soria, he said. "energized the young voter. That was impressive."

6.) Henry R. Perea, Lee Brand, Jerry Dyer, Larry Powell, H Spees -- those names have been pitched (for years, in some cases) as possible mayoral candidates in 2016. Only Brand so far has confirmed his candidacy.

Perea won't reveal his plans. Will Soria's likely influence on Fresno politics convince the supervisor to roll the dice?

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