

# **AN ELECTION OPPORTUNITY TO VOTE, AND TO RUN FOR OFFICE**

**by Supervisor Linda Parks, July 2010**

This November is a great opportunity to get out and vote and choose between two starkly different candidates for Governor, and vote for three seats on the Thousand Oaks City Council where Councilmembers Claudia Bill-de la Peña, Andy Fox and Dennis Gillette are running for re-election against several challengers. Additionally, a little-known water and sewer district called the Triunfo Sanitation District (TSD) will, for the first time ever, be having an election to fill all its seats with elected representatives.

Currently TSD which provides water, sewer, and reclaimed water service to eastern Ventura County residences, is made up of only two elected directors and the other three directors are appointed. There is no other board in the State of California that has such a composition of both appointed and elected representatives. Unfortunately in the case of TSD, the appointed positions outnumber the elected positions so ratepayers cannot vote out the majority of the board if, for example they didn't like their rates or policies. Additionally, the appointees are not required to live in the District and one longtime appointee lived 20 miles away in Saticoy.

As an appointee to TSD, it has been one of my goals to have all the Board of Directors be elected representatives who live in the District; however, for years I could not get the 3 votes necessary from my fellow directors to make the Board all-elected. For decades, none of the representatives of TSD were elected. Even the supposedly elected representatives were appointed because no one ran against them. When I investigated why people were not running for a seat on the TSD I found that notice of the opportunity to run for election on the TSD was only advertised in a newspaper in Oxnard. It seemed to have been a case of no one ever knowing they could run and no one ever running. Consequently, the same two "elected" representatives were appointed "in lieu of election" over and over again. Not surprisingly, none of the appointed directors wanted to step down and have an all-elected board replace them.

To encourage an election, I was able to advertise locally when the elected seats were open and as a result, two new Directors were elected. Currently Janna Orkney and Michael Paule are the two elected representatives on the Board. These two new Directors joined me in a 3-2 vote to have all five of the seats on the Board be selected by voters. Now Janna Orkney is up for re-election in November along with three open seats to replace the three appointed

representatives. The appointed representatives who will be stepping down are City of Thousand Oaks Councilmen Dennis Gillette and Tom Glancy, and me.

There are many important issues that TSD reviews, and hopefully a new Board will work together well and be accountable to ratepayers, fiscally responsible with its finances, and strive to provide efficient services. There is also an opportunity to accomplish something I was not able to accomplish while a TSD Board member and that is to remove the inherent conflict of interest that arises between TSD and their contracted staff at Ventura Regional Sanitation District (VRSD). TSD staff, including TSD's general manager and legal counsel are also the general manager and legal counsel for VRSD, leaving TSD with no independent legal counsel or staff to represent them during discussions involving their contract with VRSD.

I encourage people interested in water, sewer, or reclaimed water issues and who are fiscally responsible and committed to good government to run for a seat on the Triunfo Sanitation District. It doesn't require expertise, and directors have had various backgrounds. We've had a librarian, a CPA, a retired aerospace person, a retired deputy, and a dentist. Directors also are paid a stipend of a little more than \$200 per meeting, and there are generally a couple of local meetings each month in the evening. There are also opportunities for learning more at monthly breakfasts and conferences at hotels around the State where Directors are reimbursed for costs and paid their daily stipend. While I don't think you should be getting a daily stipend for breakfast meetings and attending conferences, I was on the losing end of changing that policy but you can try, or decide to keep it, if you get elected.

If you live in the Triunfo Sanitation District which includes Lake Sherwood, North Ranch, the Westlake Village portion of the City of Thousand Oaks, Oak Park or Bell Canyon, and are of voting age, you can run for a seat on the TSD. To run, you just need to fill out some forms at the County's Election's Office at 800 South Victoria in Ventura, or at the Ventura Regional Sanitation District Offices at 1001 Partridge Drive, Suite 150, in Ventura.

This November, you not only should vote, but consider becoming an elected official yourself. The first step on your journey starts today, as the filing period for election is now open!