

May 7, 2012

This is Jill Duffy with Community Comment

I prepared this writing last Thursday, May 2 – it's another overcast day, with light scattered showers. By the time this recording airs, we will know whether the clear skies and sun finally arrived on the north coast. At this moment, I am especially hoping so because I signed up with a friend last December to take our first ever photography workshop this weekend.

So, while many of us are ready for May to pull us outdoors into the sun, flowers and warmth – there is a select group of folks who cannot wait until June. Specifically, the June 5 Primary.

I know. There are a lot of people who simply decline from participating in the political process because they are tired of the negativity, grandiose promises, the obscene amount of money and the endless cycle of yet another campaign. So it's no surprise to learn that voter turn out is pretty dismal.

But, it does matter. Politics is a messy business, but without candidates and an informed and engaged public the success of local government hangs in the balance. The strengths and weakness of candidates will be on full display over the next month. As grueling as the campaign process is, it prepares the candidate to deliberate and make decisions in a public venue, handle controversial issues and engage with the public. Candidates must manage their campaigns, be instant experts on an array of issues and hone the ability to analyze and provide comment on local, state and federal measures.

Absentee and sample ballots will be arriving in mailboxes soon, and depending upon the race and our familiarity level, we may wonder who many of the candidates are. We often judge candidates by slogans, name recognition, endorsements and public image...but that is not enough. To perform our civic duty, we must be informed. We need the candidates' background, values, their experience and determine how prepared a candidate is for the job. And while political propaganda, blogs and push polls are incorporated as ways to get information and influence the issues and candidates, there is simply no replacement for an engaged media.

The media plays a tremendous role because reporters should be able to look past a candidate's image, dispel the myths and innuendo, and help present the candidates and issues in detail. And forums sponsored by local groups provide us the opportunity to meet and listen to the candidates. Last week KEET television formally launched their League of Women Voter candidate forums for the Supervisorial and State Assembly seats. Which means for the next couple of weeks you can view, or listen on KHSU, to the live coverage. The North Coast Journal will be providing election coverage in this Weds. edition, and hot on the heels will be coverage followed by the Times Standard on the 12 congressional candidates, and candidates for the 3 supervisorial races.

Get informed, involved, and remember. Those who show up run the show.

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