



The Web Site of The Sacramento Bee

This story is taken from [Sacbee](#) / [Community News](#) / [El Dorado County News](#).

El Dorado County supervisor candidates square off

By Cathy Locke - clocke@sacbee.com

Published 12:00 am PDT Tuesday, October 7, 2008

El Dorado County has to change the way it does business, and the transformation ought to begin by giving the county's top administrator more authority over day-to-day operations.

That's the consensus of candidates in the Nov. 4 runoff elections for two seats on the Board of Supervisors.

With incumbents Rusty Dupray and Helen Baumann leaving office because of term limits, the board is assured of new blood come January.

In District 1, John Knight, a member of the county's Planning Commission and the El Dorado Hills Fire Department board, and Harry Norris, a member of the El Dorado Irrigation District board, are seeking to replace Dupray.

Knight and Norris topped a field of four candidates in the June primary, with Knight edging Norris by 15 votes.

District 1 includes portions of El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park.

In the District 2 race, Ray Nutting, who served eight years on the board in the 1990s, and Barbara Smiley, community volunteer manager for Marshall Medical Center, are vying for Baumann's seat.

Nutting received 46 percent of the vote in a field of six candidates in June, and Smiley finished second with 15 percent.

District 2 stretches from El Dorado Hills across the southern portion of the county to Twin Bridges and Kirkwood.

Despite political rivalries, all four said they would call for amending the county charter to change the title and function of the county's chief administrative officer to that of chief executive officer, with the power to hire, fire and evaluate the performance of non-elected department heads.

"It's not rocket science to see that we need to rein in the micromanagement by the Board of Supervisors," said Nutting. "We've got to work through a strong CEO."

Knight said the change is necessary to achieve greater accountability among employees.

"It will alleviate some of the dysfunction, particularly in Development Services," he said.

The amendment would require voter approval, and such a measure failed by less than two percentage points in 2004. The candidates faulted current supervisors for not campaigning for the amendment.

Smiley said she believed a willing board could begin by giving more authority to the chief administrative officer, even before voters weigh in, but she agreed a charter amendment was in order.

"We have to institutionalize that," Norris said. "When we put it before the public, I would hope we would have all the supervisors out there talking it up. ... People won't vote for any proposal they don't understand."

Norris said the board has bogged down in minutiae when it should be focusing instead on policy decisions needed to improve government operations.

The candidates were reluctant to criticize current board members, but all said they would do some things differently.

In the District 1 race, Norris said he would be more proactive in pursuing a restructuring of county government. He called for an organizational study, similar to one done recently for the El Dorado Irrigation District, to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Norris said that also is an area where he differs from Knight.

"I don't think he embraces overhauling the government," Norris said. "I don't see him making a whole lot of moves to change the Planning Department."

Knight questioned Norris' commitment to change. The consultant's report on the irrigation district's operations included some damaging findings, he said. Knight questioned why it took district officials so long to identify the problems, noting that Norris and his colleagues have served at least five years on the district board.

"I will ask tough, probing questions to find out what the real issues and the real costs are," Knight said of his approach to government.

In the District 2 race, Smiley called for more transparency in county government. She was critical of the current board's handling of a proposal to move a recycling center to a new location in Diamond Springs. More than 3,000 residents have signed petitions opposing the move, which Smiley and others maintain was driven more by a developer's interests than the need to improve the recycling operation.

Smiley described herself as a consensus-builder who would work to empower citizens.

In his previous tenure as a supervisor, Nutting "pretty much ran along with the majority of the board in the big issues," she said.

Smiley said she didn't support many of her opponent's budget-cutting proposals, such as furloughs for county employees, saying they weren't effective when used during Nutting's previous terms on the board.

Nutting said he and Smiley differ sharply in their philosophies of government, arguing that she believes in more government and more regulation, while he believes in less.

He touted his board experience, as well as his understanding of the county's agricultural and timber industries.

"There is no ramp-up time for me," Nutting said. "I will hit the ground running Jan. 1."

Go to: [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.
The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852
Phone: (916) 321-1000

[Copyright](#) © [The Sacramento Bee](#)