

Opinion: Bigelow should be elected to state Senate

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In touting the new system for electing legislators and congressional representatives in California, advocates emphasized that the top two vote-getters might well be from the same party. This prediction could very well come true in the 5th Assembly District, a heavily Republican district that stretches from South Lake Tahoe to south of Mammoth Lakes, with a toe boot into Madera County.



The district sprawls across nine counties and well over half of the geography is within a national forest or park. Two-thirds of the population is white and this area supported the Republican candidates in the last gubernatorial and presidential elections.

If voter registration were not enough of an edge, two Republicans in this race have the most money and endorsements and highest name recognition. They are Madera County Supervisor and rancher Frank Bigelow and San Andreas businessman and former legislator Rico Oller.

Oller wants to return to the capitol, where he served in the Assembly from 1996-2000 and in the Senate from 2000 to 2004. Under the current term limits law, if elected he would only be eligible for one more term in the Assembly.

Oller has picked up endorsements from several county central committees in the district and from the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. He signed the no-new-taxes pledge and said his primary reason for running is to oppose the state's global warming law, AB 32, which will limit greenhouse gas

emissions.

Oller declined the opportunity for an interview with The Bee's editorial board, indicating he either doesn't want or doesn't expect our recommendation.

Regardless, Bigelow stands out to us as the best candidate in this field. As a county supervisor, he is painfully aware of how the actions and inactions in Sacramento have affected local governments. Bigelow has the endorsement of several Republican legislators from the region, including Tom Berryhill and Anthony Cannella, whose Senate districts include parts of the 5th Assembly District, and Assemblywoman Kristin Olsen, whose current 25th Assembly District includes Tuolumne and Calaveras counties. Far more than Oller, Bigelow appears willing to work with moderates and conservatives on behalf of the district

El Dorado and Madera counties have by far the largest number of registered voters in this district and both those central committees supported Bigelow. The rancher also won a key endorsement from the California Farm Bureau.

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