

Opinion: Hoffman only viable candidate for judge

By Stephen W. Valentine

The day after the primary election I was contacted by representatives of each of the candidates slated for the run off in November each asking me to endorse their respective candidates. Having spent five months touring the county and meeting so many wonderful people and listening to my two opponents talk, I decided not to offer an endorsement at that time.

For the past three months I have been asked by almost everyone I see and talk to which candidate I recommend. I thought that was odd. When deciding how to vote before every election I read and watch everything related to the election. I read every proposition and the arguments for and against. I find it amazing that people will vote without being fully informed; it is important to be informed. Voting without information seems like a good way to really mess things up.

The other night I was listening to a speech on television with my wife and commented that there were a few errors in his statement. My wife looked at me and asked me how I came to that conclusion. I told her what I had read and what documents I had examined to come to my conclusions.

Then she asked me if I had decided to endorse anyone in the November election. I started to explain that I thought people should make up their own minds based on the facts available. She shook her head and said, how can you expect anyone to catch up with you when you have been listening to and watching them for the past nine months and most people will only know what they receive in the mail as the election approaches, obviously biased to one side or the other.

She was correct of course, she always is, it just takes me a little longer to realize it sometimes.

I have contacted both candidates and asked for any additional information that they would care to share. Both sides offered to meet and talk. I asked for specific information from each and was ready to jump into the facts and work my way through any material they provided.

(Curt) Stracener's representative indicated that they had some "good information" and would provide it to me. Hasn't happened. Based on the way things went in May I suspect that a revelation will come in early October or maybe even late September. It will be sensational and maybe even newsworthy and there will not be enough time for (Joe) Hoffman to explain the facts or even to address the issue.

If a sensational and negative story about Hoffman happens within six weeks of the election, I suspect it will be purely political and not about justice. Remember, Stracener has hired a political consultant that was part of the Schwarzenegger school of politics; it won't matter whether there is any truth in the story as long as it breaks before the election and close enough to sway voters without time to disclose the truth. That is what mudslinging is all about.

I have read the papers filed in the federal lawsuit against Mr. Hoffman. Anyone can file a lawsuit and make any allegation you can think of when filing. It is not the truth; it is an allegation.

The important factors that I consider in voting for a judicial candidate is their ethics, their knowledge, their compassion and the people with whom they associate. Do not forget, attorneys have clients, not every client is an associate nor should be tied to the attorney as though he was a friend. We would never have attorneys to defend accused criminals if we had to like them.

Mr. Hoffman has been practicing law in El Dorado County since 1995. I have had cases against him and he has appeared before me on numerous cases while I was on the bench. I have always felt that I could trust him in his word and he has never been anything but ethical in his dealing with me and in my courtroom.

Mr. Stracener on the other hand seems to have an even greater lack of experience in practical law. Law that means something to El Dorado County residents. His lack of familiarity with the truth is also bothersome. A good attorney will always maintain the truth for his client's sake. If the facts do not support your client you argue the law. If the law is against your client you argue the facts. If the law and the facts are against your client you beg for mercy. A good attorney always states the truth, politicians not so much. I want a good judge that was an attorney, not a politician that wants to be a judge.

In Mr. Stracener's case I have seen him try to change the facts to fit the truth he wants the voters to learn.

1. Mr. Stracener stated that he appeared before the Supreme Court. He may have had his name listed on papers filed with the court, but there is no record of his actual appearance. A Superior Court judge should be above the mere appearance of impropriety.

2. Mr. Stracener signed up for a Tea Party Patriot's shooting event while at lunch with the Republican Women of El Dorado County. When appearing before the League of Women Voters a short time later he was asked about attending the event. Mr. Stracener stated that he did not think it appropriate to attend such an event and denied ever having signed up for the event.

So not only does he change his statements to make himself appear better for the group he is speaking to, but he thinks

an event supporting the constitutional rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment is inappropriate for a Superior Court judge to attend. The Bill of Rights is the most important part of the Constitution for a judge to know and defend.

3. When listing the number of cases Mr. Stracener claims to have heard since being appointed he erred by approximately 1,300 cases. His claim is that he counts the hearings and not the cases. All attorneys know the difference between a case and a hearing, so should a Superior Court judge.

4. While speaking to a Tea Party group in El Dorado Hills, Mr. Stracener stated the it was inappropriate for a judicial candidate to accept support from attorneys that might practice in his courtroom yet his campaign disclosure and webpage lists attorneys that support his candidacy.

Honesty is not only the best policy; in a judge it is the only acceptable policy. While I expect mud to be thrown about, I suspect it will be mis-truths and lies. I suspect they will come out just in time for the election and too late for any real research or time to refute the allegations with the truth. That's politics. It's expected in Sacramento politics and Washington politics. It has no place in El Dorado County politics.

Mr. Hoffman has maintained the high ground, been honest and willing to discuss the real issues of El Dorado County's needs within the court. No politics, no dirty tricks, no slimy Sacramento mudslinging, just a desire to help our community and improve our court.

This November please join me in voting for Joe Hoffman for Superior Court judge.

Stephen W. Valentine was on the June ballot for El Dorado County judge.