

Editorial: Veerkamp for El Dorado County supervisor

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El Dorado County's 3rd District Supervisorial District covers Placerville, Camino and the Diamond Springs areas. None of the six candidates on the ballot during the June primary garnered the margin of victory required to avoid a runoff. The top two vote getters, El Dorado Hills Fire Chief Brian Veerkamp and business owner Richard Barb, face each other in the November general election.

Barb has lived in the county 17 years. He runs a small business that builds custom shutters and other window finishes for homes and businesses. If elected, he says his major goal is to reduce government regulations and bureaucracy to help stimulate economic growth in the county.

Veerkamp, a lifelong resident of El Dorado, stresses his long experience in public service, including 14 years on the Camino Union School Board and his service as El Dorado Hills fire chief. A 2011 county grand jury report criticized lavish spending at the fire district, including high pay and pensions.

But Veerkamp shouldn't be held responsible.

After Proposition 13 passed in 1978, state law allocated a set proportion of local property taxes to the independent fire district, then a rural backwater. As urbanization increased, that set proportion of property tax soared well beyond what was reasonable, which, in turn, led to lavish pay and pensions at a number of standalone fire districts, including El Dorado Hills. State law needs to change to solve that problem.

In their discussion with voters, both candidates stress that the slumping local economy is the biggest issue facing El Dorado County.

Both say they want to scale back regulations and fees on builders and other businesses. Veerkamp supports the voter-approved county general plan and the work of the El Dorado County Economic Development Advisory Committee, which seeks, sensibly, to steer high-density development to urban centers that have the infrastructure to support it.

Veerkamp's long service on a school board and in the fire service gives him a deeper understanding of government budgets and planning challenges in these difficult economic times. For that reason, The Bee recommends Brian Veerkamp for El Dorado County supervisor.