

Judge candidates square off in court



What does “judge pro tem” mean?

That question was at the center of a legal challenge between two candidates for El Dorado County Superior Court judge. Dylan Sullivan took Joe Hoffman to court over his use of the phrase on his ballot statement. The two are running for the same seat in the June 3 election.

Placer County Superior Court Judge Charles Wachob heard the case because El Dorado County judges had recused themselves.

Ultimately Hoffman agreed to remove “judge pro tem” as one of his professions.

He told *Lake Tahoe News* he did so because of the hour that the case was being heard. If the proceedings continued beyond that afternoon, the county may not have been able to get ballots off in time for military personnel overseas to vote. Hoffman said that is why he didn't fight the matter further.

Hoffman says the judicial handbook of a judges' association allows him to call himself a judge pro tem.

Dylan and her attorney disagree.

“Nobody defines judge pro tem. He has been a settlement law attorney in family law cases. That is not a judge. What he has done is all volunteer,” Jacqueline Mittlestadt, Sullivan's

attorney, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “But the law is clear. If you are not a judge, you can’t say you are a judge. You can be subject to fines and criminal penalties.”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*