

Election to replace Nutting stirs up EDC

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

At the Cielo Estate winery in Shingle Springs, political upheaval in El Dorado County seemed to drift away momentarily Wednesday evening as a gentle breeze faintly ruffled leaves of heritage oaks.

Inside a reception room, as guests sipped Sierra foothills Pinot Grigio, five of the six special election candidates for District 2 supervisor politely discussed pointed matters of development, traffic and water.

A 45-minute drive away in Fair Play, guests at the hacienda-style Perry Creek Winery listened to soft guitar music, nibbled finger foods and raised glasses of Zinfandel in a fundraiser for the other District 2 candidate, Jennifer Nutting.

Yet such pastoral settings are ultimately unable to obscure the bitterness, dysfunction and strangeness of the supervisorial special election that roil El Dorado County these days.

After a politically charged prosecution, visiting Superior Court Judge Timothy S. Buckley on June 6 ordered four-term Supervisor Ray Nutting ousted from office over misdemeanor convictions for improperly raising bail money. Nutting's wife, Jennifer, is now running for his seat, even as he seeks to halt the Sept. 9 special election.

Last week, Nutting sought a judicial stay of the vote in a writ that claimed his rights were violated by his removal. He charged that the judge wrongfully "excluded me from my office, withheld my salary ... and prohibited me from performing my

duties” based on an unproven allegation of official misconduct.

The state’s 3rd District Court of Appeal is not required to rule before the special election. If the court fails to act by Sept. 9, the winner will fill the District 2 seat. And even if he prevails on appeal, Nutting won’t be able to reclaim the office – though can sue the county for damages.

So as the legal challenges fester, and with no guarantee of a vote, five special-election candidates met at the Cielo Estate forum. Before about 100 people, they weighed in on proposed subdivision developments and traffic-inducing projects and sparred over who best could protect the county’s rustic flavor.

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