

Novasel headed to Placerville as supervisor



Sue Novasel will be the next El Dorado County District 5 supervisor. Photo/Provided

By Susan Wood

With El Dorado County Supervisor Norma Santiago being termed out of her District 5 seat, it means someone new will be sworn in in January. Sue Novasel is the unquestionable winner with 100 percent of the precincts reporting. She has 3,592 votes or 59.92 percent of the vote.

Her opponent, Kenny Curtzwiler has 2,331 votes at 39.58 percent.

Novasel, who lives in Christmas Valley where Internet

reception can be iffy at times, yelled the early numbers across the room to the handful of friends and family gathered to support her when *Lake Tahoe News* told her the news over the phone.

Although absentee results have often been telling in races particularly in this county, Novasel was not taking anything for granted while the numbers were still changing.

"I'm humbled. I had hoped the voters understood that I have a lot of experience," she said.

The longtime Meyers resident knows that experience needs to be accelerated as El Dorado County is facing huge issues ranging from a consistently fluid budget to having its chief administrative officer resign Nov. 4. Novasel sees that as an opportunity. After all, it's how she started on the Lake Tahoe Unified School Board a dozen years ago.

"There's certainly a lot of dysfunction in the county. I know we need to tighten down with the budget," she said, alluding to a low point as perhaps "a good way to start."

Phone calls to Curtzwiler were not returned.

As with most elections, only a minority of the people who live here actually vote.

However, the hope is that tradition will trump the dismal prediction of Tuesday's mid-term elections for El Dorado County. The voters usually demonstrate more enthusiasm than most of the 58 counties in California. And that's what county Registrar Bill Schultz is counting on this time.

"We're hoping for around 60 percent, and it could be higher. Historically we've had a better turnout than most counties," Schultz told *Lake Tahoe News* on election night.

As of 3pm Election Day, Schultz said his staff raked in a 32 percent return on vote-by-mail ballots at 34,221. More than

73,000 were sent out.

"That's a little higher than June," he said, referring to last summer's primary.

"Most of the time they tell the tale," he added, as most voters turn to an easier way to vote that's been described as simple as ordering pizza.

In the county of 106,931 registered voters, absentees make up 68 percent. Still, Schultz also heard from election workers that attendance has been better than predicted at precincts.

In El Dorado County, many could be more interested in local issues than watching how much of a margin Gov. Jerry Brown would win by. Having two seats up on the county Board of Supervisors is "the big one right there," Schultz quipped. And this race could set the pace for that 60 percent voter turnout and strong absentee prediction.

Early analysis has shown that of the 17,825 registered voters in the county's District 5, 10,752 vote-by-mail ballots were issued.

Statewide, the prediction was for less than 50 percent of voters to turn out. The record low was set in 2002 with 50.5 percent turnout. It is expected that 60 percent of those will be cast via absentee votes. The record was set in 2010 with 48.4 percent absentee voters.

The problem comes when those voters turn them in on Election Day. Those ballots don't get counted until days after the election, which is why the frontrunners can change and election night results are not solid. It could be as many as 1 million ballots that will be outstanding.

Kathryn Reed contributed to this story.