

Endorsement: Dan Flores is the right choice for Sutter County at this pivotal time

By The Appeal-Democrat Editorial Board
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The Yuba-Sutter region is currently heading in an incredibly positive direction when it comes to economic development and growth. This has been spurred, in some part, by migration from the Bay Area and Sacramento as Californians seek a better quality of life at a more affordable price.

Because of where Sutter County is currently positioned, it is ripe for an even further explosion of opportunities.

With this in mind, the Appeal-Democrat has endorsed Dan Flores for the Sutter County Supervisor District Two race.

Flores is a longtime resident and is incredibly knowledgeable about what it will take to make sure Sutter County's best days are ahead. His involvement with groups such as the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) has given the residents of Sutter County a place at the table when it comes time for needed funding or support on any given project.

The relationships Flores has fostered over the years with organizations such as SACOG and other regional leaders is invaluable to the residents of Sutter County.

Flores has demonstrated over the years not only his sensitivity to the needs of current residents and businesses in the county, but also what is required to allow Sutter County to be prominent in the minds of the decision makers at the state and national level.

"For nearly a decade, I have participated and networked with local and state committees, councils, and lobbyists. I have made useful connections that are critical in helping our county get things done," Flores has said.

Running against Flores is a relative newcomer to the Yuba-Sutter area, Courtney Ortega. Her views on how the county should move forward are counter to the idea of progress, pushing the idea that county government should contract during a time when services are increasingly required – related to such issues as homelessness and a greater need for infrastructure as new homes and businesses come to the county.

Ortega also has suggested that "liberty" and "freedom" should be a higher priority than the health and safety of the community. Her vocal opposition to COVID-19 mitigation efforts have highlighted this.

During a Feather River Tea Party candidate forum in April, Ortega made this point in reference to Dr. Phuong Luu, the bi-county health officer.

"She might be able to give us advice, but it's the job of the supervisors to say, 'Hey, you might be afraid for the health of the county, but we're not going to sacrifice the liberty of the people who live here for fear or for health. That freedom comes over health and that's what we value here,'" Ortega said.

She made a similar comment during another candidate forum hosted by the Yuba-Sutter Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Appeal-Democrat later that month.

“The people of this county are smart enough and care enough about themselves and other people to keep themselves safe,” Ortega said. “And if they’re sick, they’re smart enough to stay home. I would give people the right to choose to what level that these mandates that they wanted to follow.”

Unfortunately, as scientific evidence has shown, a person can have COVID-19 without showing symptoms. While some members of the public would most likely choose to stay home if they were sick or showed symptoms of the virus, not all who have it would know they were contagious. The purpose of mitigation efforts for COVID-19 or any deadly virus is to safeguard against this reality and protect our most vulnerable residents.

In her comments during the candidate forums and on various Facebook posts, Ortega also has been pushing for a reduction in county buildings and staff – with many statements that are either false or incredibly misleading. Of most concern to the Appeal was a question she posed about the Sutter County Museum and Sutter County Library.

“We also need to ask the community if they still value having a full time library open and full time museum,” Ortega said on Facebook. “If not, these are positions that need to be addressed and the funds reallocated.”

Needless to say, a properly funded and functioning library and museum are essential to the overall education of residents of any given area. Each is often a source of pride for any community.

Ortega also has associated herself with groups such as the Yuba-Sutter Freedom Coalition, which meets at the Church of Glad Tidings. The coalition has shown videos and promoted false information that is shared by many that believe in or are a part of the QAnon conspiracy theory movement. The coalition also has hosted several speakers loosely associated with QAnon, including Bishop Leon Benjamin, former General Michael Flynn and others.

Ortega has told the Appeal that she does not believe in many of the conspiracy theories pushed by those connected with QAnon, but her association with those that hold such extreme views should be taken into account.

It’s also important to consider experience at a time when it is needed most. Flores has been involved with groups such as the Greater Sacramento Economic Council, SACOG, the Economic Development Committee, and Health and Human Services.

During her Tea Party forum appearance, when asked if any of the counties should withdraw from SACOG and form a new council with rural northern counties, Ortega said she wanted more information on the topic – appearing to not know what SACOG was, despite the large role it plays for many area jurisdictions.

“I think I want a little bit more information on the topic, to be honest with you,” Ortega said. “I think I don’t fully understand what you’re asking. So are you talking about the greater Sacramento, like, economic, or?”

While the Appeal is certainly not against newcomers or non-politicians who seek an elected office, the position Ortega is looking to fill at such an important time in Sutter County’s history should be considered before turning in your ballot. Even if a candidate has never held an elected office, they should still possess the knowledge and expertise that it takes to make the correct decisions.

Flores has the experience, knowledge and connections to help Sutter County as it continues its upward trajectory.
