

GUEST COMMENTARY

JEFF RUBIN From the community

Editorial painted a grim picture

Contra Costa Times

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By Jeff Rubin

While the editors of the *Contra Costa Times* are philosophically opposed to recalls — and we respect their opinion — their editorial telling people to vote “NO” on the Pinole recall was the most unflattering, least-ringing endorsement of any political issue that I have ever read.

The editors validated every one of the recall issues, and went as far as to call council members Maria Alegria and Stephen Tilton “unprofessional and incompetent.”

Here’s what the editorial said:

- “We can understand why a number of residents would be dissatisfied with the council members’ sorry performance.”
- “The council members did absolutely nothing about the fact that a local restaurant owner named Gary Wong had fallen way behind on his payments on a city loan.”
- “Some residents suspected that Wong had been given preferential treatment on his delinquent loans because of his cozy relationship with the Alegria contingent.”
- “The council voted not to renew the contract of city manager Belinda Espinosa, who apparently was trying to sort out the mess.”
- “There have been allegations of death threats, intimidation, and political payback.”
- “Council members’ behavior could rightly be called unprofessional, incompetent even.”

State Assemblyman Mark DeSaulnier, one of Alegria’s friends and supporters, also opposes recalls on philosophical grounds. Nevertheless, he took time out of his busy legislative schedule to meet with about 25 recall supporters on a recent Sunday morning at my home in Pinole. DeSaulnier, in fact, called us and requested the meeting. He stayed for nearly three hours. We had a very pleasant, respectful exchange of ideas.

He told us why he supports Maria and the good work she had done on several committees with him. He also watched Maria’s candidate’s statement on Pinole community access TV and was not pleased when he heard words he had not used and not authorized — “Supervisor Mark DeSaulnier has stood up and said, ‘Have you no shame?’ — attributed to him by Maria when she compared the recall campaign to the late Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose hearings in the early 1950s sought to ferret out communists

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in America. DeSaulnier told us he had not seen the script for Maria's statement and "those would not have been my choice of words."

Endorsements are nice, sometimes even useful, but not when a candidate fabricates a statement and attributes it to one of her political friends, as Maria did with DeSaulnier.

DeSaulnier respected our position, and we respected his. Why can't our LOCAL elected officials give their constituents the same respect, and treat them with the same courtesy, even if they are on opposite sides of an issue? Unfortunately, that is not the case in Pinole, where people who disagree with Maria and Stephen are called "vicious," "vile," "vindictive," and "political thugs."

The Times' editors say elected officials should not be recalled unless they "are guilty of gross misconduct that has dishonored the office." The newspaper doesn't think those standards have been met. We disagree. We believe that's exactly what Maria Alegria and Stephen Tilton have done.