

CAN YOU BUY AN ELECTION?



Special interests supported several candidates in the November 2007 council election in Benicia, a city with similar demographics to Pinole. Read the article below, from the *Contra Costa Times* for that election's results.

Benicia election shows money's limitations

WITH EVERY ELECTION, the amount of money spent on campaigns expands like waistlines after Thanksgiving. But a bowl of gravy-soaked cash does not guarantee success, as Benicia's recent election outcome proves.

The two losers out-raised the three successful candidates two-to-one. Combined, the candidates and the various independent expenditure groups had collected a shocking \$331,000 for the mayor and City Council races in a town of 27,000 people. **Mayor-elect Elizabeth Patterson raised about \$6 a vote, a fraction of the \$30 per vote raised by or in support of challenger Bill Whitney.**

The inverse relationship between money and results is a product of small-town politics, campaign overkill and two, last-minute smear pieces on Patterson that may have cost Whitney the election.

In a small town, many residents know the candidates personally, and the flood of costly mailers and local newspaper ads probably did little good. But, ironically, the two ill-conceived hit pieces on Patterson that arrived in Benicians' mailboxes several days before the election may have torpedoed Whitney's campaign: He lost by just 179 votes.

A small cadre of construction firms from outside Benicia paid for the nasty mailers, which inaccurately painted Patterson as a screaming shrew seeking office in a vendetta against the city over a property dispute.

"It was a foolish and critical tactical error by inexperienced people with their own agendas," said a political consultant. "It was very bad for Whitney."

It was bad for Benicia, too.



From 2004-2007, Councilwoman Maria Alegria raised \$60,000. From 2006-2007, Councilman Stephen Tilton raised \$10,000. The majority came from special interests.

Maria Alegria



Stephen Tilton

Vote YES to recall Maria Alegria and Stephen Tilton

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