

Elect Rutherford

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The cloud of corruption swirling about San Bernardino County government is a clear sign that voters need to make changes. The county will not end its pattern of misconduct by handing another term to officials linked to scandal -- a list that includes the current 2nd District Supervisor, Paul Biane.

Voters should instead elect Janice Rutherford, one of the five challengers in the June 8 election, to represent the district. Rutherford has experience in local government after serving on the Fontana City Council since 2000. She also has a strong grasp of the central need for San Bernardino County: a higher standard of ethics for county government.

Giving Biane a third term as supervisor would make a joke of any talk about reform. He played a central role in the Colonies Partners' lawsuit, now at the center of a corruption investigation. Biane was one of three votes for the Colonies settlement in 2006, along with Supervisor Gary Ovitt and then-Supervisor Bill Postmus.

Prosecutors call that deal with a generous political contributor a \$102 million theft from taxpayers, driven by bribery and extortion. Biane is one of the unnamed, uncharged co-conspirators listed in the charges prosecutors unveiled in February.

He was also part of an earlier, unsuccessful attempt to settle the case. Biane and Postmus met with the Colonies in 2005 to negotiate a \$77 million deal -- without lawyers present. The county's own attorneys blasted that proposed agreement as unreasonably generous to the Colonies.

Biane was also the driving force behind Measure P in 2006, a ballot measure that hiked supervisors' pay by 29 percent under the guise of imposing term limits. And he voted for the surreptitious boost in benefits supervisors gave themselves in 2007, concealed in an agenda item that gave the public no clue what the supervisors were doing.

San Bernardino County deserves better. Rutherford supports measures to

improve official behavior, including a county ethics commission and a ban on gifts to elected officials. She favors a sunshine ordinance and other steps to provide greater transparency to taxpayers about what county government is doing.

She also emphasizes the need for a strong county administrative officer. Supervisors have a long tradition of bypassing the county's top administrator to interfere in lower-level county decisions, often to benefit friends and campaign donors. Careful administrative controls, free from meddling by county supervisors, are key to ensuring that county government avoids future scandals.

Rutherford has also compiled a strong record on the Fontana City Council. During her time in office, for example, the city saw growth that increased revenue to the point where the council could phase out a residential utility tax in 2004. She brings an informed, professional approach to that city's government.

Ethics and professionalism are exactly what San Bernardino County government needs. Voters should support the candidate who best demonstrates those qualities, and elect Janice Rutherford as 2nd District supervisor.